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Chess

SPEED DEMON

Hikaru Nakamura wins the London Chess Classic and 2018 Grand Chess Tour in final blitz game following draw epidemic

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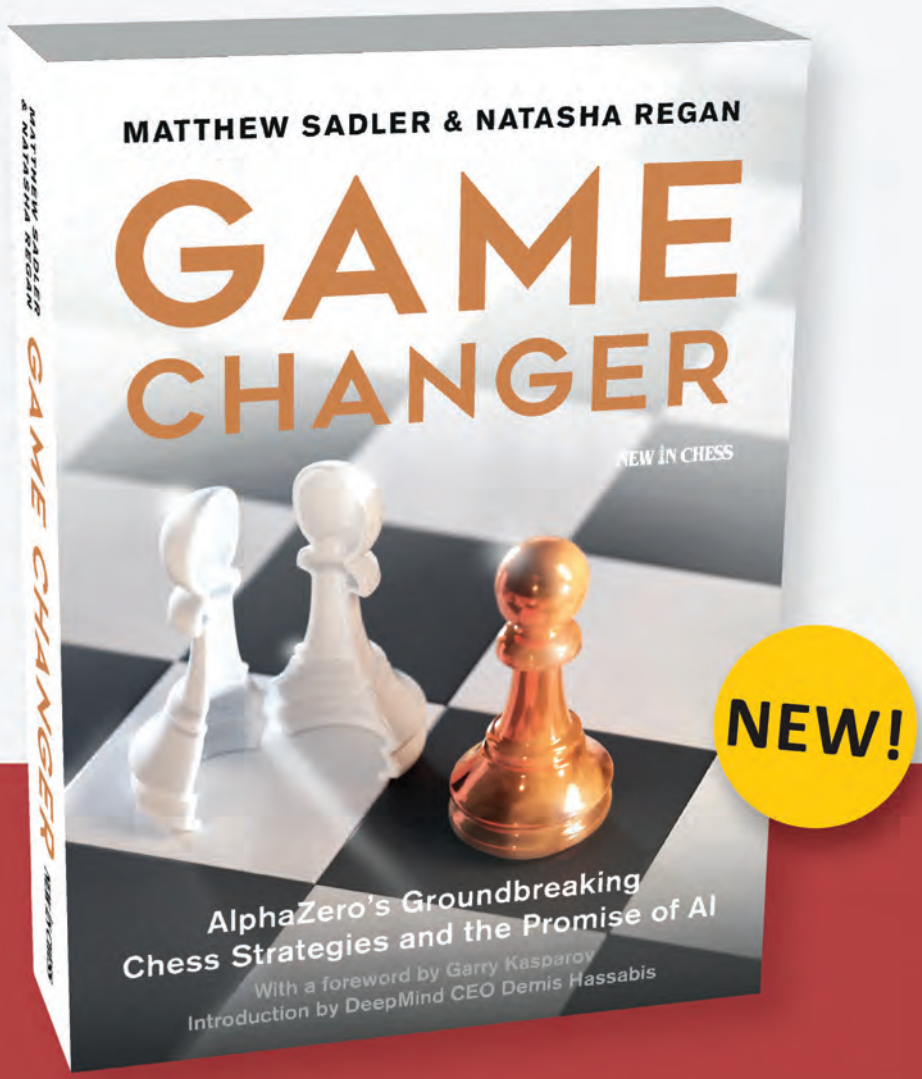
It's a Knockout! - Gawain Jones wins at the Classic and annotates a key encounter
Is Hastings Dying? Danny Gormally was a little concerned despite sharing first place
Coming of Age - Adam Raoof has been delighted by junior success at Hampstead

VISIT…

"Chess has been shaken to its roots by AlphaZero"

Garry Kasparov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Chess Editorial

By Executive Editor, IM Malcolm Pein **@TelegraphChess**

The tenth London Chess Classic was the most ambitious yet in terms of the variety of events and number of participants. Not only did it take place in four different venues, from the beginning of the education conferences, to the closing dinner at Simpson's, it lasted 12 days. The Chess in Schools and Communities staff and all the external teams did a tremendous job putting it all together. In all there were 16 different tournaments, conferences and courses.

Thanks go to the new sponsor The Lohia Foundation and, of course, to DeepMind for hosting the first four days of the London Chess Classic elite events and also the Masterclass for top juniors, as well three days of activities for local school children. The DeepMind HQ at Google is a truly prestigious venue.

We got started with the Pro-Biz which did not go to the form book, although the amateur in the winning team, Rajko Vujatovic, has won it before. I had thought the pairings of Garry Kasparov and Terry Chapman or Matthew Sadler with DeepMind co-founder Demis Hassabis would be favourites, but they both lost in the first round.

The GMs moved first and both teams were allowed to call two one-minute time outs when they could go away from the board and consult, while the opponents remained at the board and could consult there. The clocks are stopped. Timing is all important and the pro also needs to be aware of when it might be good to call a time-out if he can see there is a hidden resource or major strategic point that needs to be explained.

D.Howell & R.Vujatovic - G.Kasparov & T.Chapman
Pro-Biz Cup, London 2018
Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♗f5 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗e2 ♘e7 6 0-0 ♘d7 7 ♘bd2 h6 8 ♘b3 ♕c7 9 ♗d2 ♗h7 A bit of shadow boxing in the opening. Black wants to play ...c6-c5, but only when he is a bit better developed, otherwise the opening of the position could backfire. White wants to prevent ...c6-c5, but is wary of playing c2-c4 as it would give away a great square on d5 after ...dxc4.

10 ♖c1 ♘c8 11 ♗a5 ♘cb6 One of the most important things in the Pro-Biz is to use your time-outs well. Rajko was unsure of the best plan here and consulted David.

12 ♗d3 ♗xd3 13 cxd3 ♗e7 14 ♘e1 0-0 15 f4 ♕c8

16 ♔h1

Played after another time-out called by Rajko and as seen in the game Grigoriants-Howell, Gibraltar 2017!

16...f5 17 g4!

Without delay. While the Black queen's away, White must make hay.

17...♕e8 18 ♖g1 ♔h7 19 ♖c2 ♖g8 20 ♖cg2 ♕f7 21 ♗d2 g6 22 ♕f3 ♖af8 23 ♘a5 ♖b8 24 b4 ♘f8 25 a3 ♘a8!

An excellent regrouping from Kasparov.

26 ♕h3 ♘c7 27 ♘c2 ♘e8 28 ♘e3 ♘g7 29 ♘b3 b6 30 ♗e1! ♖c8 31 ♗h4 ♖h8

32 ♗xe7

One of my favourite phrases when coaching is, when attacking, try to: 'Bring everyone to the party!' When you are defending an attack and short of space, one symptom of that may be that you get outnumbered because you lack squares to

put your defensive units on.32 ♘d2! c5 33 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 34 gxf5 ♘xf5 35 ♘xf5 gxf5 36 ♘f3! wins and here 32...♗xh4 33 ♕xh4 ♔g8 34 ♘f3 ♖h7 35 ♕h3 looks good.

32...♕xe7 33 ♖g3

Again, missing 33 ♘d2!.

33...♖g8 34 ♕g2 fxg4! 35 ♘xg4 ♘h5

Black has some counterplay.

36 ♖h3 ♘d7 37 ♘d2 ♖cf8 38 ♘f3 ♖xf4

Maybe 38...♖g7!?, if not 38...♘xf4?? 39 ♘xh6 ♘xg2 40 ♘f5+, while Garry said he thought 38...♕f7!? would have been OK.

39 ♘xh6!! ♔xh6 40 ♖xh5+! ♔xh5

If 40...gxh5 41 ♕xg8.

41 ♕h3+ ♖h4 42 ♘xh4 ♕xh4 43 ♕xe6 ♖g7 44 ♖g3 ♘f8

44...♕xd4 45 ♕h3+ ♕h4 46 ♕g2! ♘xe5 47 ♖h3 is winning too.

45 ♕c8 ♕f4 46 ♕h3+

46 ♖h3+ ♔g5 47 ♕d8+ ♔f5 48 ♕f6+ ♔g4 49 ♖h4+ was an immediate win.

46...♕h4 47 ♕g2 ♖f7 48 ♖h3 g5 49 ♕e2+

49 e6 ♘xe6 50 ♕e2+ was possible too.

49...♔h6 50 ♖xh4+ gxh4 51 ♕e3+ ♔g6 52 ♔g2

52 ♕c1, winning the c- and d-pawns, was a mundane way to finish it.

52...♘e6 53 ♔g1 ♖f4! 54 ♕h3 ♘xd4 55 ♕c8 ♘f3+ 56 ♔g2 ♘e1+ 57 ♔h3

57...♘xd3

Unlikely though it must have seemed at the time, there was a draw as 57...♔g5!! threatens mate with 58 e6 ♖f3#, so White must repeat with 58 ♕g8+ ♔h5 59 ♕h7+ ♔g5.

58 e6 ♘f2+

58...♔f6! 59 ♕xc6 ♖c4 60 ♕d7 ♘f4+ 61 ♔xh4 ♘xe6+ would have fought on.

59 ♔g2 ♘g4 60 e7 h3+ 61 ♔g3 1-0

Rajko and David then drew with Levon Aronian and Justin Baptie, playing together for the second time, and both those pairs won in round three to set up a blitz play-off between the amateurs. It's ended this way before and Rajko won again.

Quite a team. Rajko Vujatovic and David Howell celebrate their Pro-Biz victory.

Meanwhile the British Knockout had already reached the semi-final stage. There were nearly a couple of upsets. Ravia Haria was very close to defeating David Howell, taking him to a tie-break, and Jovanka Houska put Jonathan Hawkins under some pressure. You can see a fine game played by Jovanka inside.

With the Knockout finals taking place alongside the Grand Chess Tour Finals, there were always four games for the spectators and this worked really well, particularly when the Classical games were in progress on day one of the semi-finals and final. I ensured the BKO format mirrored the GCT format. As you will see inside, the GCT finals, like the World Championship, needed Rapid chess to break the tie and even that wasn't easy!

One matter to reflect on is that the GCT winner did not score a single victory in Classical chess. As I predicted, all the Classical games in the finals at London were drawn. Weighting victories in Classical is designed to encourage risk taking, but the fear of defeat also makes players more cautious.

Nigel Short, in his thought-provoking foreword to the otherwise poor effort that is the Carlsen-Caruana match book, which the London Chess Centre has removed from sale, suggested we are approaching a crisis for the slower form of the game. We need to think about the future of Classical chess generally and my instinct would be to speed it up *a bit*. In particular, how about dispensing with any increment before the first time control? As I write, Magnus has only just broken a run of 21 draws, and that only after Jorden van Foreest decided he wanted to take on the champ in the same line of the Pelikan that was hotly disputed during the world championship match.

Congratulations to Hikaru Nakamura who triumphed after a gripping battle with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. It's been quite a profitable year for the speed chess wizard.

World Rapid and Blitz

One of the first tests for the new FIDE team was to organise the World Rapid and Blitz at pretty short notice. All sides in the election were agreed it could not be in Saudi Arabia as they failed to provide assurances on visas for Israeli, Iranian or Qatari players.

I had been toying with inserting it into the London Chess Classic, but the new team naturally staged it in Russia and it looked like an excellent event with a big prize fund and a spectacular venue of the Manege on St. Isaac's Square in central St. Petersburg. What it lacked in top flight players – a few of the elite could not make it – it made up for in very strong locals. I also liked the late addition of prizes for combined scores and the total on offer was $1.5 million, which to some degree may have been because the event was still badged the King Salman Rapid and Blitz.

Magnus Carlsen was determined to capture the triple crown of Classical, Rapid and Blitz titles and declared in an interview on Chess24 during their commentary of day 2 at the London Chess Classic: "I'm going to take back the triple throne. No usurpers are going to be left alive!"

In the end he had to settle for (just) two of the three titles and the number one spot in the rankings in all forms of chess. Carlsen started the Rapid disastrously and lost his first two games (see inside), and a late run only got him to fifth. There was a surprise

2018 GRAND CHESS TOUR

GRAND CHESS TOUR 2018 FINALS

#GrandChessTour

POS.	PLAYER	GCT POINTS	PRIZE MONEY
1	GM HIKARU NAKAMURA (USA)	34.5	$225,000
2	GM MAXIME VACHIER-LAGRAVE (FRA)	31	$160,000
3	GM FABIANO CARUANA (USA)	26	$145,000
4	GM LEVON ARONIAN (ARM)	34	$135,000
5	GM WESLEY SO (USA)	26	$80,000
6	GM SERGEY KARJAKIN (RUS)	25.5	$72,500
7	GM SHAKHRIYAR MAMEDYAROV (AZE)	25	$65,000
8	GM ALEXANDER GRISCHUK (RUS)	18	$45,000
9	GM VISWANATHAN ANAND (IND)	15	$45,000

Unsurprisingly FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich held the World Rapid and Blitz in Russia. Here we see him making the first move for Magnus Carlsen in St. Petersburg.

22-year-old Russian Grandmaster Daniil Dubov was part of Carlsen's WCC team and is now World Rapid Champion.

winner in Daniil Dubov of Russia who managed to remain unbeaten, which was quite a feat, as he scored 11/15, half a point ahead of Shak Mamedyarov and Hikaru Nakamura, who took the silver and bronze medals respectively. Carlsen's slow start meant he was off the podium even though he clambered his way to 10½. He lost a third game to Ukrainian speed chess expert Alexander Zubov en route.

The 15-year-old Iranian prodigy Alireza Firouzja made a fantastic showing and came sixth in the Rapid, defeating the old buddies Alexander Motylev and local boy Peter Svidler in successive games.

Carlsen returned even more determined for the Blitz and ended day one tied for the lead with Vladislav Artemiev on 9½/12. Interestingly he had said, in the same Chess24 interview referred to above, of the Russian: "Yeah, he's good. He has a very good natural feel for the game, which is great in blitz. I think he's legit." On day two Carlsen pulled away, scoring crucial victories over the young pretenders Firouzja and the world's highest-rated junior, Jan-Krzysztof Duda. The Polish no.1 recovered to take silver as Nakamura secured double bronze.

There were plenty of entertaining games.

T.Gareyev-A.Morozevich

World Rapid Ch., St. Petersburg 2018

Reti Opening

1 ♘f3 d5 2 c4 d4 3 g3 ♘c6 4 ♗g2 e5 5 0-0 e4 6 ♘e1 h5 7 d3

If 7 ♗xe4 h4 with a decent attack and ...♘f6 to come, or 7...♗h3 8 ♕b3 ♕c8, which was the epic game Hawkins-Pert, British Knockout Championship 2015, won by Black. 7...♗h3 8 d3 ♗h3 9 ♘g2 ♕d7 also ended in a win for Black in Malakhov-Tomashevsky, Jurmala 2015. I guess 5 d3 will probably be preferred in future

7...e3!?

This is why we like to watch 'Marvellous Moro' as he was known when he played more regularly. 7...h4 8 ♗xe4 ♗h3 followed by ...♘f6 and ...♕d7 was also promising.

8 fxe3 h4! 9 exd4 ♘xd4 10 e3

10...hxg3! 11 hxg3

11 exd4 ♕xd4+ 12 ♔h1 ♖xh2# is the brutal point of Black's play.

11...♘f5 12 ♖xf5!?

12 ♗xb7 ♗xb7 13 ♖xf5 looks suicidal and it is: 13...♖h1+ 14 ♔f2 ♗d6 threatens ...♗xg3+ and ...♕h4+, and the game seems already won.

12...♗xf5 13 ♗xb7 ♖b8 14 ♕f3 ♖xb7!

Returning the favour and retaining the flavour. 14...♗d7 and 14...♘e7 followed ...♕d7 also looked enticing.

15 ♕xf5

15 ♕xb7 ♗d6 intends ...♖h3, which would be terminal. Then 16 ♘d2 ♗xg3 17 ♘df3 was likely White's best chance.

15...♘e7 16 ♕f2 ♖b6!

Preparing to double on the h-file.

17 ♘c3 ♖bh6 18 ♕g2

18...♖h1+! 19 ♕xh1 ♖xh1+ 20 ♔xh1 ♘f5 21 ♘e4 ♘xg3+! 0-1

If 22 ♘xg3 ♕h4+ 23 ♔g2 ♗d6 24 ♘e4/f1 ♕xe1.

There was plenty of the traditional banter between Carlsen and Giri before the event. Carlsen pronounced that Giri would be beaten by all the Russians and then, in round 13, he had the chance to secure the social media bragging rights.

M.Carlsen-A.Giri

World Blitz Ch., St. Petersburg 2018

English Opening

Giri was outplayed from the opening, but the game ended a bit randomly.

23 ♗f3?

23 ♗b5 ♕d5 24 ♗a6+ ♔d8 25 ♖fd1 wins.

23...♕d6??

23...♗d5 24 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 battles on, and there was a miraculous equaliser: 23...g5! 24 ♕g3 ♕d6, escaping to the sanctuary of the endgame.

24 ♕e4 ♖d8 1-0

There is no defence in view of 25 ♖b8+ ♔d7 26 ♕a4+. Carlsen told Norwegian television: "There are many who have fantasies as to what is the best way to start the day. This is mine."

60 Seconds with...
Chris Skulte

Born: 3rd September 1985, just outside Sydney, Australia.

Place of residence: London.

Occupation: CFO in a Tech Startup (and Celtic Tigers 4NCL team manager).

Enjoyable? Very much so. It's difficult work, though not as difficult as chess.

And home life? Peaceful now that I have settled back in the UK. In the last eight years I have lived and worked in four countries!

But sometimes good to escape to: Anywhere that nature screams look at me, i.e. a sandy beach by the ocean, snow-capped mountains, dense bushland.

Sports played or followed: Play hockey and chess; love to watch rugby, AFL (Aussie Rules), and tennis. I'm Aussie...you name it, crack open a cold beer, and I'll watch it with you.

A favourite novel? *The Wheel of Time* series by Robert Jordan. I hate it when series I like finish, and this one had 14 books released over 23 years.

Piece of music? Anything you can dance or rock out to. Foo Fighters to Disney classics.

Film or TV series? *Friends*, *Narcos*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *IT Crowd*.

What's the best thing about playing chess? Haha, winning! I joke – sort of. Probably that feeling when you suddenly 'get it' like a tactic or study.

And the worst? The stress. I get quite upset when I lose too.

Your best move? Once around move 30 when I was about to give up, I found a potential fortress. I didn't think it was so obvious, so I started moving quickly pretending to lose interest, and it worked! Getting lucky is sometimes more fun than playing well.

C.Skulte-H.Milligan
Sydney 2011

31 b4 ♕c2 32 ♕xc2 ♗xc2 33 f4 ♔c8? (missing 33 ..h5 34 ♘e2 ♗d1 35 ♘g3 h4) **34 ♔b2 ♗f5 35 ♔c3 b5? 36 cxb5 cxb5 37 ♘e2 ♗b1 38 a3 ♔d7 39 ♘d4 c6 40 ♘f3 ♔d6 41 ♔d4 f6 42 ♘h4 ♔e6 43 ♔c5 ♗e4 44 ♔d4 f5 45 ♔c5 ♔d7 46 ♘g6 ♔e6 47 ♘h4 ♔f6 ½-½**

But less memorable than your worst move? Actually, I'm relatively scar free with chess. Life on the other hand...

And a highly memorable opponent? I drew a game against Evgeny Sveshnikov. It was a rapidplay and I didn't look who my opponent was. I only realised when I went to submit the score, and lost my breath.

Favourite game of all time? Skulte vs Skulte back in 1990. I don't remember it, but I love my dad for introducing me to this wonderful sport.

The best three chess books: My favourite three are: *My System* (this classic always teaches me something new), *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual* (endgames are just beautiful), and *Tal-Botvinnik, 1960*, which is the first time I felt I got inside a GM's head.

Is FIDE doing a good job? Could be worse. I think they could be doing better with grass roots initiatives.

Or your National Federation? For a small and not well funded association, it's decent. Unfortunately intraclub chess leagues in Australia are difficult due to the distance one must travel.

Any advice for either? Focus on the enjoyment chess can bring, not just ratings and elitism.

Can chess make one happy? Yes, it is better to have loved and lost (games), than to never have loved at all.

A tip please for the club player: Tactics, tactics, tactics. Spend 80% of your time solving them and you will improve greatly.

Ed. – At the January 4NCL weekend, Celtic Tigers supremo Chris Skulte showed the way to his troops, comfortably drawing with opponents rated some 170 and 280 points higher.

Wars and Draws

The London Chess Classic and the 2018 British Knockout Championship trialled a new match format, combining classical, rapid and blitz to the delight of Hikaru Nakamura

It doesn't feel that old, but the 2018 London Chess Classic was already the tenth edition and saw some major changes. In came new sponsor, the Lohia Foundation, who support many important projects in the fields of education, healthcare and the arts. Also new was the format for the top section. Gone was the 10-player all-play-all we had become accustomed to; in was a new-look format for the finals of the 2018 Grand Chess Tour.

The semi-finals pitted the man who had topped the GCT leaderboard, Hikaru Nakamura, with Fabiano Caruana, whom readers may recall only qualified at the eleventh hour, overcoming Wesley So in a rapid play-off for the final berth straight after the Sinquefield Cup. The other match-up saw two fighters and good friends face off, Levon Aronian taking on Maxime Vachier-Lagrave.

The format was novel, but appeared well worth a try. Each match would begin with two classical games, worth six points for a win, at the time control of 40 moves in 100 minutes followed by an extra hour to finish the game, and with a 30-second delay from move one. The third and final day of each match would then see two rapid games (25 minutes with a 10-second delay), worth four points to the winner, followed by four blitz games, worth two points each and played with a 5-3 time control. As such, 15 points would suffice for victory.

After the 12 draws between Carlsen and Caruana, pretty much everyone was hoping that London would finally see a decisive classical game as the semi-finals began at the plush setting of Google HQ, just by King's Cross and the home of Demis Hassabis and his *AlphaZero* team. Unfortunately, the players didn't appear to have read the script or maybe the standard of play is so high these days, and the elite so used to playing each other, that a draw is simply by far the most likely result.

To be fair to Levon Aronian, another day he would have won the classical portion of his match 2-0. The Armenian legend introduced yet another new idea on the black side of his favourite 8 a4 b4 Anti-Marshall and quickly took over. Vachier-Lagrave was forced to ditch the exchange for a pawn, but Black never had a definite win, peace eventually being agreed after 74 moves. The French no.1 was again out-prepared in the return, a Symmetrical English, and this time had to give up a pawn ahead of another impressive defence and hold in 58 moves.

Meanwhile Fabiano Caruana knew that his best chance of getting past his compatriot, with the added bonus of reaching the top spot on the rating list, was to exploit the advantage of the white pieces in his first classical game, and he certainly went for it.

F.Caruana-H.Nakamura
1st matchgame
Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 ♗e7 5 ♗f4 0-0 6 e3 b6 7 ♕c2

Caruana preferred 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 9 ♗d3 ♕a5+ 10 ♔f1 in the rapid games, but after 10...♗a6!? Nakamura had made use of his slightly rare sixth-move choice, with 11 ♗xc7 ♗xd3+ 12 ♕xd3 ♘a6 13 ♗g3 ♘b4 14 ♕e2 ♖fc8 15 a3 ♕a4 16 ♔g1 ♘a2 leaving Black with some, if not objectively quite enough play for his pawn.

7...♗b7 8 ♖d1 ♗d6 9 ♗g3

Already a novelty, so rare is Black's set-up.

9...♘bd7 10 cxd5!

Seizing central control in view of 10...exd5?! 11 ♗xd6 cxd6 12 ♗d3.

10...♘xd5 11 e4 ♘xc3 12 bxc3 ♗xg3 13 hxg3 e5?!

It's natural for Black to want to fight back in the centre, but he should really have preferred 13...♕e7, and if 14 ♗d3 c5 15 e5 h6 when nothing too terrible should happen.

14 ♗b5!

Caruana is quick to pinpoint the downside to Black's last.

14...c6

Blocking in his own bishop, but 14...exd4? 15 ♖xd4 c6 16 e5! g6 17 ♕d2 would have been game over.

15 ♗e2 ♕c7 16 g4!

A strong advance, preparing to cramp Black ahead of doubling on the h-file and, of course, 16...h6? 17 g5! couldn't have been tolerated.

16...♖fe8 17 g5 ♖ad8

17...exd4 18 cxd4 ♘f8 was the alternative, but after 19 ♔f1 or even 19 ♘e5!? White remains in charge of the position.

18 ♔f1

Caruana is in no rush, but a certain Garry Kasparov, who was visiting DeepMind that day, preferred 18 ♗c4!?. Needless to say he had a fiendish tactical idea in mind, namely 18...b5? 19 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 20 ♕b3+ ♖e6 21 g6+! followed by 22 ♘g5(+) or 22 gxh7, with a crushing position.

18...b5 19 ♖h4 a6 20 a4 ♕a5

Trying to prevent White from having all the play on both flanks, but now Caruana can crash through.

21 g6! hxg6

Naturally not 21...fxg6?, in view of 22 ♕a2+ ♔h8 23 ♘g5 h6 24 ♘f7+ ♔h7 25 ♘xh6! gxh6 26 ♕f7+.

22 ♘g5 ♘f8 23 ♖d3!

The point of White's play. Black is set to be mated down the open h-file.

23...♗c8

Nakamura finds the only way to stay on the board for now.

24 ♕b3 ♕c7 25 axb5 axb5

26 ♖f3

Far from terrible, but 26 g4! would have regained control of h3 and after 26...♘e6 27 ♖dh3 ♔f8 28 ♘xe6+ ♗xe6 (or 28...♖xe6 29 ♕a3+ c5 30 ♗xb5) 29 d5! cxd5 30 ♗xb5 White would have been doing pretty well.

26...♗e6 27 d5

Consistent and fairly necessary, but Black is able to grab this pawn.

27...cxd5 28 exd5 ♖xd5 29 ♘xe6

29 g4!? ♘d7 30 ♖fh3 ♔f8 was no longer

at all clear, but might still have been a better winning try for White than the game.

29...fxe6 30 ♖fh3

This looks scary, but Nakamura's king now has an escape route and he is able to mobilise.

30...e4 31 ♖xe4 ♖a8 32 g3 ♕c5 33 ♖e3 ♖a3

Suddenly Black is quite active.

34 ♕b2 ♕d6 35 ♖h4 ♖a4 36 ♖he4 ♕a3

By no means forced, but the elite are very good these days at finding the best way to simplify to completely drawn endgames.

37 ♕xa3 ♖xa3 38 ♗g4 ♖c5 39 ♗xe6+ ♘xe6 40 ♖xe6 ♖axc3 41 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 42 ♖xg6 b4 43 ♖b6 b3 44 ♔g2 ♔f7 45 f4 g5 46 fxg5 ♖c2+ 47 ♔f3 b2 48 ♔g4 ♔g7 49 ♖b7+ ♔g6 50 ♖b6+ ♔g7 51 ♖b7+ ♔g6 ½-½

Nakamura didn't expend much energy the next day, being happy to quickly hoover off all the pieces against the Petroff Defence, and so it was on to rapid and blitz with both matches all square at 6-6.

Caruana appeared a little surprised by 1 c4 e5 2 g3 in the opening rapid encounter and was forced to ditch a pawn, but one candidate for being 2018's Minister of Defence never really looked in serious danger, and duly drew. The return encounter saw Caruana build up another formidable-looking position with the 5 ♗f4 Queen's Gambit, but he was to falter at the pivotal moment, going from clearly better to clearly worse in just five moves in a tense middlegame.

Trailing 12-8 entering the blitz, it was always going to be a tall order for Caruana to turn things round, not least considering the legendary speed ability of his adversary. Surprisingly Nakamura was outplayed in the opening game, but thereafter asserted control to take the final three games and the match 18-10.

In the other semi-final, for a third game in a row Aronian squandered a clear advantage and was unsurprisingly made to pay as Vachier-Lagrave ground down the Berlin Wall in their second rapid encounter. Blitz expert MVL also took that portion of the match 3-1 and so, by dint of his 18-10 victory, reached the final.

A Final Drawathon?

Following a rest day, the players transferred across town to the traditional home of the London Chess Classic, Kensington Olympia. For Vachier-Lagrave, the final was to be painfully something of a mirror reversal of his semi-final. Hikaru Nakamura delayed simplification by one move in their opening encounter, a sharp line of the Grünfeld, allowing Black's rook on to the seventh. However, just like MVL, Nakamura is no mean defender and he never allowed Black anything clear in a pawn-up endgame.

Vachier-Lagrave then found himself with a pleasant edge in a double-rook ending arising from the Berlin, but he would later admit that he was: "Pretty disappointed at myself because I did what Levon did against me in game two. I played just too fast and missed resources". Indeed, Nakamura found a neat resource to break up White's kingside majority, going on to hold the draw with relative ease.

Both rapid games on the closing Monday at Olympia were drawn, albeit only after a sterling defence effort from Vachier-Lagrave this time in the second. It was then MVL's turn to come extremely close to winning in the first blitz game, after which two more draws followed, making seven in total. Was the final heading for Armageddon? Fans of classical chess were no doubt relieved that did not come to pass, while left scratching their heads that Hikaru Nakamura had won the 2018 Grand Chess Tour without winning a single classical game (+0 =6 -3 was Nakamura's below-par effort at the Sinquefield Cup). Nevertheless, one could have nothing but admiration for the dominant manner in which Nakamura finally won a game against Vachier-Lagrave.

Hikaru Nakamura's save against Fabiano Caruana helped to keep Magnus Carlsen as world no.1.

H.Nakamura-M.Vachier-Lagrave
8th matchgame (blitz)
English Opening

1 ♘f3 c5 2 c4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e3 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 g6 7 ♗b5+ ♗d7 8 ♗e2 ♗g7 9 0-0 0-0 10 d4 ♗c6 11 ♗a3 cxd4 12 cxd4 ♖e8 13 ♖c1!?

Natural and new, Nakamura having preferred 13 ♘e5 in both the rapid and first blitz games.

13...♕a5 14 ♕b3 ♘d7 15 ♗b4

15...♕f5?

The queen won't make it back to safety from here. As such, 15...♕a4 was necessary, and if 16 ♕xa4 ♗xa4 17 ♖c7 ♖ec8! 18 ♖xb7 ♗c6 when White can obtain no more than reasonable compensation for the exchange.

16 ♗d3! ♕h5 17 e4 e6 18 h3!

The net begins to close in around the black queen.

18...♖ad8 19 ♖fe1 a5 20 ♗d2 a4 21 ♕b1 ♖c8?

Vachier-Lagrave is thrashing about in a bad position, but this was the final chance for 21...♗h6!, aiming to rescue the queen via h6 and g7.

22 ♗e2! ♗f6

Now if 22...♗h6 there's 23 ♘g5 ♕h4 24 g3 and there goes the queen.

23 ♖cd1

Refusing to rush, but there was already 23 ♘h2, and if 23...♕h4 24 ♖xc6! ♖xc6 25 g3! ♕xh3 26 ♗g4.

23...♖ed8 24 ♘g5 ♕h4 25 g3 ♕h6 26 ♘xf7 Crashing through.

26...♕xh3 27 ♗f1

Or 27 ♘h6+ ♔g7 28 ♗g4 and

goodnight, Vienna.
27...♕h5 28 ♗e2 ♕h3

29 ♗g4! 1-0
The fork on h6 decides proceedings.

The third-place play-off also began with two draws, and both in under 30 moves. Evidently for the elite London is not the city in which to win a game of classical chess. Levon Aronian clearly fancied his chances on the third day of speed chess, even admitting that it was a good "mathematical decision" to quickly force a draw when White in Game 2 against Caruana's Petroff.

Aronian might have produced the wittiest line of the Classic when he referred to being defeated by MVL as being "Brexited from an equal position", but he was to regret his decision to head straight for the rapid and blitz games against Caruana. The last laugh went to the American no.1, who might have been no match for Carlsen at rapid chess, but was able to grind out a victory in his second rapid encounter with Aronian. To his credit Aronian fought back to 12-12 with victories in the first two blitz games, but it was Caruana who then impressed, winning the final two games to seal third place and $60,000, half the amount which Nakamura took home.

It's a Knockout!

There could be little doubt that elitist folk who only followed the Grand Chess Tour Finals were likely unimpressed by the new format, with its 8 draws from 8 classical games. Admittedly, at times that wasn't due to a lack of effort, while it must also be acknowledged that Caruana's opponents were generally happy to steer play as quickly as possible into the rapid and blitz games.

However, the format quite simply needs more testing and in an event run in parallel to the GCT semi-finals and final, the format worked a treat. I write of the 2018 British Knockout Championship, whose final two stages mirrored those of the Grand Chess Tour, albeit with an increment rather than delay being used per move; an unAmerican and arguably far more sensible way of doing things.

Before we come to the semi-finals of the British Knockout, the story of the tournament begins on a manic opening Saturday at the Novotel, Hammersmith, which saw all four preliminary round matches take place on the same day. Having qualified from the 4NCL Anniversary Congress at Telford, Simon Williams found himself up against a slightly rusty Harriet Hunt and progressed 1½-½, despite almost losing on time in their opening game when he asked the arbiter how much time was added at move 40, only to discover it was zilch and so have to dash back to his seat.

Williams-Hunt was the only opening round match not to go to tie-break. Both draws between John Nunn and a man some 42 years his junior, Alan Merry, were entertaining to say the least, but the most notable effort was by IM Jovanka Houska who recovered from being 1-0 down against Jonathan Hawkins no less, and in some style.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave knocked out good friend Levon Aronian in the semi-finals of the GCT.

J.Houska-J.Hawkins
2nd matchgame

23 ♘b6!
A lovely blow from Houska, as if 23...♘xb6 24 ♗xf6 gxf6 25 ♘xh6+ ♔f8 26 ♕g4 ♕c7 27 ♘f5!, mating.
23...♕f8 24 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 25 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 26 ♗xf6 gxf6 27 d5!
It makes good sense for the exchange-up side to keep opening lines.
27...exd5 28 ♕g4+ ♔h8 29 ♖d1 ♗e5 30 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 31 ♖xd5 ♖e8 32 ♖e3 ♖c8 33 ♖ed3 ♖e8 34 g3 ♗xb2 35 ♔g2
Ruling out any potential counterplay ahead of doubling on the seventh with deadly effect.
35...♖a8 36 ♖d7 a5 37 ♖b7 ♖b8 38 ♖dd7 ♖xb7 39 ♖xb7 ♕d6 40 ♕c4 ♕e6
The only way to save the black king, but the resulting ending is quite hopeless.
41 ♕xe6 fxe6 42 ♖b5 ♗c3 43 ♖xa5 1-0

It was then Hawkins' turn to bounce back impressively, taking both 10-5 play-off games to reach the quarter-finals. The remaining matches featured something of a rating upset as at the end of a gruelling day, youth triumphed over experience. Ravi Haria knocked out Matthew Turner 2-0, while in the most eventful of all the preliminary round matches, Alan Merry eventually went through in an Armageddon encounter against John Nunn, winning on time in a lost position.

The quarter-finals also featured an intense one-day format, as well as the introduction of the four seeded players. Simon Williams' early advance of 'Gary, the g-pawn' caused Michael Adams a few anxious moments, but by giving up a pawn Adams reached the safety of an endgame which he held with ease, ahead of massacring the Ginger GM's Classical Sicilian in the return.

Second seed David Howell was fortunate to survive an exchange-down position after losing control in a time scramble in his first encounter with the in-form Ravi Haria. Howell would, however, reach the semi-finals after comfortably winning the speed play-off. Elsewhere Gawain Jones largely outplayed Alan Merry to advance 1½-½, while the most impressive game of the round was Luke McShane's smooth endgame conversion.

L.McShane-J.Hawkins
2nd matchgame

24...f5?

Lashing out, possibly having under-estimated White's next. 24...♖xe7 25 ♖xe7 h5 was another way of disturbing the bishop. After 26 ♗h3 Black's king is, however, still locked out of play and 26...b6, with the idea of meeting ♔e3 with ...♖e8, still an unpleasant defence for him in view of White's much more active king and stable kingside.

Another radical idea was 24...b5!?, which does place a further pawn on the wrong-coloured square, but White can no longer cramp with c3-c4 and 25 ♔d3?! (White should prefer to build up more slowly, as with 25 h4, although whether he will definitely be able to crack the black defences is a tough question to answer) 25...♖xe7 26 ♖xe7 h5 27 ♗h3 f5! should now supply sufficient counterplay.

25 ♗d1!

25 ♗h3 ♗e4 was Hawkins' idea, but McShane's crafty retreat keeps a pair of rooks on and the bishop won't have to remain dormant on d1 for long.

25...♖h8

Black would also have found himself suffering somewhat after 25...h5 26 ♖g7 ♖xe1 27 ♔xe1 ♖f6 28 ♖g8+ ♔a7 29 a4 ♔b6 30 ♖g7.

26 ♖g7 ♖e5 27 ♖xe5!

Even with a kingside majority, Black will be unable to hold his position together.

27...dxe5 28 ♖e7 e4 29 ♗e2 ♔c8 30 ♔e3 g5

The white king would also have continued to badly outclass its counterpart after 30...♔d8 31 ♖g7.

31 ♗c4 ♗d7 32 ♖g7 h6 33 ♔d4

Coming round to attack the vulnerable black pawns.

33...♔d8 34 ♖g8+ ♖xg8 35 ♗xg8 1-0

Hawkins has had enough of this almost meister-gegen-amateur display. 35...♔e7 36 ♔e5 followed by ♗h7 is an easy win.

A Successful New Format!

It might not have worked brilliantly for the Grand Chess Tour, but the same format could only be described as a success when applied to the semi-finals of the British Knockout Championship.

Top seed Michael Adams faced defending Knockout Champion Luke McShane. The latter's exchange sacrifice looked a little speculative in their opening encounter, but slightly surprisingly Adams was happy to repeat moves rather than try to exploit the extra material. Possibly he was confident of success as White and sure enough Adams quickly built up a huge position with the French Tarrasch. McShane was forced to give up his queen for rook and bishop and it looked like it would be but a matter of time before he was finished off by Adams' usually impeccable technique. However, McShane resisted like a lion and with Adams again possibly a little under the weather, Black salvaged a draw after some 85 moves.

Possibly unable to believe he wasn't in front after the classical games, Adams uncharacteristically overextended against McShane's Berlin Defence in the first rapid game. He was also outplayed in the second, meaning he trailed 14-6 and needed to win all four blitz games. To his huge credit, the long-time British no.1 rallied and, helped by one McShane blunder of a rook, won the first three blitz games. With the crowd on the edge of their seats, a play-off appeared likely, only for Adams' tactic to be met by a counter-trick and then an almost unheard of blunder of the queen by Mickey, meaning that Luke went through 16-12.

In the other semi-final, David Howell found himself in the unusual position of facing his favourite Grünfeld Defence as an extremely well-prepared Gawain Jones held a most solid draw with some ease. The return was somewhat more exciting.

Notes by Gawain Jones

G.Jones-D.Howell
2nd matchgame
Giuoco Piano

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 0-0 ♘f6 5 d3 d6 6 c3 a5

These lines where Black plays the pawn to a5 rather than a6 have started to become fashionable. Now White can't grab space on the queenside, but can hope to exploit the slightly weakened b5-square.

7 ♖e1 h6 8 ♘bd2 0-0 9 ♘f1

So far we had both played fairly quickly, but here David sunk into thought and took 30 minutes on his reply.

9...♘e7

This normal-looking move is actually slightly unusual. The differences in these Italian positions are incredibly subtle and here I also had a long think trying to recall the most accurate path.

9...♗e6 has been the main move here, when White generally attempts to exploit the pawn being on a5 with 10 ♗b5.

10 ♘g3

10 ♗b3 was played by Vachier-Lagrave in a great illustrative game. White drops his bishop back and prepares to break in the centre. Following 10...♘g6 11 d4 ♗a7 (11...exd4 is no longer so logical as Black can't force the same concession in White's structure with ...d6-d5, but the way the game goes Black needs an improvement somewhere) 12 h3 ♗d7 13 ♘g3 a4 14 ♗c2 ♘h7?! 15 ♘f5 the strong knight gave White a beautiful position. After 15...♘g5?! 16 ♘xg5 hxg5 17 ♕h5 ♘f4 18 ♗xf4 exf4 19 h4! g6 20 ♕h6 gxf5 21 exf5 White's attack was already decisive in Vachier-Lagrave-Navara, Biel 2018.

10...♘g6 11 h3 a4

David takes control of the b3-square and so I can no longer play as Maxime did in the earlier note. I now need to take care that my bishop does not get trapped. I felt that Black's position was easier to improve and so it was time to open the centre.

12 d4 exd4 13 ♘xd4!?

13 cxd4 is obviously a more usual recapture, but here I thought Black must be fine after 13...♗b4 14 ♗d2 ♗xd2 15 ♕xd2 d5.

13...♖e8 14 ♗e3 ♗b6

14...♘xe4? fails to the typical tactic 15 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 16 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 17 ♕f3+.

15 ♕c2 d5 16 exd5 ♘xd5

The position has opened up and become very dynamic. I'd been eyeing up the upcoming sacrifice for some time. I thought for 20 minutes and couldn't figure it all out, but decided it was dangerous enough for a practical game. After all, if I don't venture it then Black is very comfortably placed.

17 ♗xh6!?

After analysing for a while with the engine, I should perhaps call the move dubious, but it's incredibly complex.

17...♖xe1+ 18 ♖xe1 ♗xd4

During the game I thought getting rid of my strong knight was forced, but actually it seems to be slightly inaccurate.

Following 18...gxh6 19 ♗xd5 (after 19 ♘h5 Black doesn't need to transpose, but has 19...♕g5! 20 ♖e8+ ♘f8 when White doesn't have a knockout blow and so Black is doing well, but not 20...♔h7? 21 ♗xd5) 19...♕xd5 20 ♖e8+ ♘f8! (I underestimated this retreat; 20...♔h7 21 ♘e4 is very dangerous for Black, but with best play will probably result in a draw by a perpetual on f6 and h5, while 20...♔g7 21 ♘df5+ ♗xf5 22 ♘h5+ ♔h7 23 ♘f6+ ♔g7 24 ♘h5+ is another draw thanks to that theme) 21 ♕d1! (21 ♕e2?! ♗xh3! is an important defensive idea; following 22 gxh3 ♖xe8 23 ♕xe8 ♗xd4 24 cxd4 ♕xa2 Black is a pawn up with the better position) 21...c5 (21...♗xh3 22 ♘e4! ♗xd4 23 cxd4 ♖a6 24 gxh3 is pretty messy) White's best seems to be 22 ♕f3 (22 ♘e4 was what I was intending, but I'd overlooked 22...♗d8!, another one of those moves that engines spot immediately, but are extremely hard to foresee during a game) 22...♕xf3 23 ♘xf3. Thanks to the pin White will regain some material, but Black will have the better chances after something like 23...♗c7 24 ♘f5 ♗xf5 25 ♖xa8 ♗d7.

19 cxd4 gxh6

20 ♘h5!?

A quiet move and another roll of the dice. I'd seen this looked interesting when I sacrificed on h6. As well as bringing another piece closer to Black's king, I have the concrete threat of taking on d5 and then forking on f6.

Objectively I should probably have played 20 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 21 ♖e8+ ♔g7 (21...♔h7 doesn't seem as natural to me as now the f7-pawn is weaker and a knight check on f6 will be terminal, although apparently it's also '0.00'; however, 21...♘f8? no longer works: 22 ♕xc7 ♗xh3 23 ♘e4! is winning for White) 22 ♕xc7 ♗xh3. I got this far during the game and thought I would be in trouble, but I have the cute queen sacrifice 23 ♕xb7! ♕xb7 24 ♘h5+ ♔h7 25 ♘f6+, with the perpetual we saw in earlier lines.

20...♘gf4

20...c6? wouldn't help due to 21 ♗xd5 cxd5. During the game my intention was 22 ♖e8+ ♕xe8 23 ♘f6+ ♔f8 24 ♘xe8 ♔xe8 when material is going to be around level, but Black's pieces don't coordinate well, so I thought White should be a little better. However, 22 ♕c1! is a strong intermezzo: 22...♔h7 (22...♕g5 23 ♖e8+ ♔h7 24 ♕c7+ regains material) 23 ♖e8! and Black is lost.

Instead, 20...♘ge7 would give White the option of playing 21 ♖xe7 ♕xe7 (21...♘xe7? 22 ♘f6+ ♔f8 23 ♕h7 is mating) 22 ♗xd5 ♖a6 with another very complicated position.

21 ♖e5

Renewing the threat of taking on d5.

21...♗e6 22 ♕c1

22 ♕d2 looks similar, but my queen is better placed on c1. From c1 my bishop is defended and my queen can't be hit. Here Black is doing well after 22...♘xh5 23 ♖xh5 ♘f6 24 ♖xh6 ♘e4! 25 ♕f4 ♕g5!.

22...♘xh5?!

The most logical, but the engine points out I actually wasn't attacking the knight.

22...♕f8! was the cold-blooded defence. Here I wouldn't have anything better than 23 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 24 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 25 ♘f6+ ♔h8 26 ♘xd5. I'd have one pawn for the exchange and Black's king is still a bit vulnerable, but obviously I'd be fighting for a draw. Therefore objectively I've pushed a bit too hard, but chess is a practical game and you have to find ways to set your opponent problems.

23 ♖xh5 ♘f6 24 ♖xh6

24...♖a5?!

An enterprising try. Black controls the g5-square, but White has another route into his position. By now Black had to try the unnatural 24...♘e8!. The all-seeing engine informs me it's '0.00' after both captures on e6: 25 ♗xe6 (25 ♖xe6!? fxe6 26 ♕h6 ♘g7 27 ♗xe6+ ♘xe6 28 ♕xe6+ is drawn as Black can't escape the checks) 25...fxe6 26 ♕c2 ♘g7 27 ♕h7+ ♔f7 28 ♕g6+ ♔g8.

Instead, 24...♘h7 was what I was expecting, but this allows 25 ♗d3! ♘f8 (25...♘g5 is a better try, but the knight is trapped here; after 26 ♕e3! I'll be able to play f2-f4 and end up a pawn ahead) 26 d5! (opening lines) 26...♗xd5 (26...♕xd5 27 ♕c3 reveals the main point of the pawn sacrifice) 27 ♖h5! (freeing up h6 for the queen) 27...♘g6 28 ♕h6 and wins.

25 ♗xe6 fxe6 26 ♖g6+ ♔f7 27 ♕h6 e5 28 g4!

Bringing another unit into the attack. Now Black's position cracks.

28...exd4 29 g5 ♖f5 30 gxf6 ♖xf6

For now material is back to being level, but Black's king is too exposed. I had to be careful though, as if I give Black any time my own king could be vulnerable, while the d-pawn is a dangerous source of counterplay.

31 ♕h7+

I analysed the endings after 31 ♖xf6+ ♕xf6 32 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6, but Black is at least in time to hold on the queenside. The h- and f-pawns can't get past a lone king.

31...♔e6 32 ♖g8! The queen doesn't have a safe square. **32...♕d7 33 ♖g7 ♕c6 34 ♖xc7 ♕b6 35 ♖xb7**

Nervous and a little short on time, I saw I could repeat the position and pick up a pawn in the process. As Dave Smerdon pointed out to me afterwards, I could have wrapped up the game immediately with 35 ♕e4+ ♔d6 36 ♖xb7.

35...♕c6 36 ♖c7 ♕b6 37 ♕e4+ ♔d6 38 ♖c4 In a worst case scenario I'll now be two pawns up in a rook and pawn ending. Instead, 38 ♖b7 would have transposed back to Dave's line.

38...d3 39 ♖d4+ ♔c7 40 ♕e7+ ♔c8

The time control has been reached. I double checked that Black has no trick in the upcoming king and pawn ending.

41 ♖c4+

Keeping it simple and making sure I don't miscalculate, although it transpires 41 ♕e8+ is forced mate: 41...♔b7 42 ♖d7+ ♔a6 43 ♕c8+! (43 ♕a8+ ♔b5 44 ♖d5+?? ♔c4 is one of the lines I saw which convinced me not to go for mate; here Black is suddenly completely winning) 43...♔a5 44 ♖d5+ ♔b4 45 ♕c3#.

41...♖c6 41...♔b8 42 ♖b4 picks up the queen.

42 ♕e8+ ♔c7 43 ♖xc6+ ♕xc6 44 ♕xc6+ ♔xc6 45 ♔f1 1-0

McShane and Jones kept the crowd entertained, Gawain gaining revenge in the British Knockout final for losing to Luke in the quarter-finals in 2017.

David Howell immediately forced his way back into the match, grinding out victory and with the black pieces in the first rapid game before again failing to get anywhere as White as Gawain Jones took a 11-9 lead into the blitz. All four blitz games were hard fought, but with victory in the first two Jones sealed his passage into the final, winning the second with just lone rook against bishop.

With just the difference between £6,000 and £4,000 to play for, the third-place play-off between Adams and Howell was always likely to be overshadowed by the final. Whether or not motivation was an issue, neither player appeared at their best. Once again, Adams might well have won both classical games, but again they were both drawn, as were the two rapid games before Adams claimed third spot with a 3-1 victory in the blitz.

Fortunately for the crowd and sponsor, much more blood was spilt in the final. It began with what was, partly thanks to the efforts of Jones, the opening of the 2018 British Knockout Championship, the Giuoco Piano, which occurred in as many as seven games. Once again, Gawain Jones was very well prepared, sacrificing a pawn to neutralise White's pressure ahead of regaining it with a drawn endgame.

Jones was at his tactical best in the second game to take a 9-3 lead and then claimed the £15,000 first prize by winning both rapid encounters. McShane rallied to an extent by taking the opening two blitz games, before fittingly the last two went to Gawain The 2018 British Knockout Champion thereby ended 2018 with a career-high rating of 2691.

G.Jones-L.McShane
2nd matchgame

21 ♖ad1!

A good practical move, centralising while setting Black a calculational test.

21...♖c5?

The rook will not prove well-placed here. As such, the fearless 21...♖xb2! was required and after 22 ♘xe5!? (22 ♗c6 ♗e6 23 ♕c3 ♖eb8 should be OK for Black) 22...♗xe5 23 ♖xe5! (23 f4 ♖b4 24 ♖xe5 ♖xc4 25 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 26 ♗xc4 ♔f8 isn't anything for White) 23...♕xe5 24 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 25 ♗xe8 ♕xe8 (if 25...♗e6 26 ♕c6) 26 ♕c5+ ♔g8 27 ♕a5 ♖b5! 28 ♖d8 ♖xa5 29 ♖xe8+ ♔f7 30 ♖xc8 ♖a1+ 31 ♔h2 a5 Black should be able to hold without too much difficulty.

22 ♕d3 g6

Creating some luft. 22...♗e6? 23 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 24 b4 would have been quite annoying in view of 24...♖c6? 25 ♘d4.

23 c4 a5

Necessary to save the rook, but now White strikes.

24 ♕a3!

Threatening ♘xe5 and being unafraid to walk into a pin.

24...♗d6

25 ♗xf7+!!

The star move. Suddenly Black finds himself in huge trouble as 25...♔xf7 26 ♖xd6! ♕xd6 27 ♘g5+ ♔g8 28 ♘e4 ♕d4 29 ♕xc5 would surely be a won endgame for White, but the alternative is no better.

25...♕xf7 26 ♖xd6 ♕xc4?

Defending the rook and restoring material parity, if only briefly as now White can win the exchange by force.

27 ♘d2!

A retreat Jones had seen before sacrificing on f7. The knight is going to land on f6 with some effect.

27...♕b4 28 ♕xb4 axb4 29 ♘e4 1-0

Is Hastings Dying?

So pondered GM Danny Gormally after sharing first place at the 2018/19 Hastings Masters

I don't mean the town, although it also has its problems; I mean the chess tournament. As was explained at the opening ceremony, Hastings is the oldest chess tournament in the world.

It has to be said that most of the watching spectators following the action unfold in round one looked like they had also been around for the first edition as well. There was an encroaching infirmity not just about those watching, but also about the players as well. Look around and it was most of the same faces, players that have been coming here for the last 20 years – more, in some cases. I had also taken on a senior role. With the absence of Keith Arkell, who was unfortunately battling shingles, and Mark Hebden, who elected to play in Telford instead, the depressing reality dawned on me: I was now the senior British Grandmaster at Hastings.

Perhaps this was a pivotal moment, a final entrance into old age. Like Dylan Thomas though, I was determined to rage against the dying of the light. I really felt I had a serious chance of winning the tournament. This optimism wasn't misplaced – and perhaps mainly stemmed from the simple fact that Hastings was weaker than it had been in any previous edition I could recall. Not to put it too lightly, the tournament was desperately weak and really short on numbers.

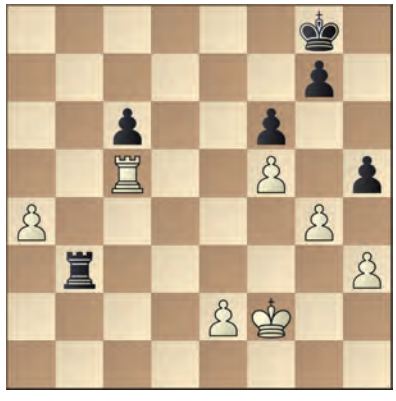
Simply put, Hastings is dying as a chess tournament and needs some kind of boost – and quickly. My feeling is that the organisers need to think about a different venue, and perhaps rebooting the premier tournament, bringing back the once famous all-play-all format of the top section. In my own mind though, the 2018/19 Hastings Masters was still worth winning. Any chess tournament is.

During the recent Isle of Man tournament, I gave up alcohol. I was shocked into this state of events by a feverish dream. A mysterious woman was telling me that if I didn't improve my circulation then I would have a heart attack, and when I woke up my heart was pounding, all of which jolted me into the life-changing step of knocking the booze on the head. I tend to listen to my dreams (just ask my bookie), although this major step has also caused me to reflect on the last 20 years of my chess career, all of which were accompanied by alcohol, and wonder whether these years had simply been wasted when I could have obtained much better results sober.

Perhaps I didn't care enough about being 2600, because it seems obvious in hindsight that nights dominated by Stella and Hoegaarden were never going to be conducive to good chess. Look at some of those guys who do well in the British: Howell and Adams. Sure, they are strong players in any case, but it's no coincidence that during the British they don't go out and get wasted, and tend to end up winning the tournament. Those who do give themselves to alcohol, by contrast, rarely if ever win.

My new sober self was feeling confident at Hastings. There was no need for excuses anymore – it was all about how good I was as a chess player. Another upshot of giving up booze was also noticeable: I was thinking in a far more clear-headed way, and could therefore ponder in a much more constructive way about what I needed to do to improve. When I had played the 4NCL Open in Telford, it was quite obvious from looking at the games that I was failing due to a lack of patience. The opportunity to demonstrate that I had learned from these experiences came in round two against Adam Taylor.

D.Gormally-A.Taylor
Round 2



35...hxg4?

A serious inaccuracy that puts Black in severe danger. Around about here I was resigned to the game ending in a draw and, indeed, this could be achieved if Black simply strives to start wiping out White's kingside with 35...♖xh3! 36 a5 ♖a3 37 gxh5 ♔h7, which looks very drawish.

36 hxg4 ♖b4

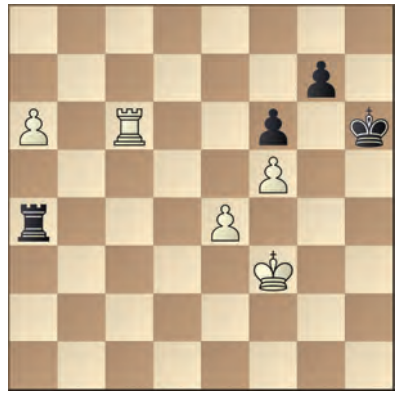
36...♖a3 37 a5 ♔f7 might have been a better try. I think it's essential that Black retains the c-pawn, so that White isn't completely dominating on the queenside.

37 a5! ♖xg4?

37...♖a4, with the same idea as above, again looked better.

38 a6 ♖a4 39 ♖xc6 ♔h7

39...♖f4+ 40 ♔g3 ♖xf5 41 a7 wins for White. **40 ♔f3 ♔h6 41 e4**



The time control has been reached and White is winning because the pawn on a6 is too strong. Eventually the white king will be able to break through to the queenside and help this pawn to promote, and in the meantime Black isn't able to achieve enough counterplay on the other side of the board.

When we reached this position, initially I thought it was still a draw, but then I realised that the black king could never seriously threaten my e-pawn, because it is easily defended by a timely ♖e6! at some point. I think in his time trouble before move 40 that Adam had missed this important point as well.

41...♔g5 42 ♔e3 ♔g4 43 ♖e6!

In my nervous state I gave serious

Horntye Park once again played host to the Hastings Congress, but might the hall not have been a little fuller and more players a little younger?

consideration to 43 ♖c7? ♖a3+! 44 ♔d4 ♖a4+ 45 ♔d5 ♖a5+ 46 ♔c4 ♖xa6 47 ♖xg7+ ♔f4 48 ♔d5 which is tricky for Black to defend, although I didn't see a way of making progress after 48...♖b6! (not 48...♖a5+? 49 ♔e6 ♖a6+ 50 ♔f7 ♔xe4 51 ♔g6! ♔e5 52 ♖e7+ ♔d5 53 ♔f7! when ♖e6 is coming, and it's curtains; here 51...♖a5 52 ♖e7+ ♔f4 53 ♖b7 also wins for White, as the black king is badly misplaced) 49 ♖e7 ♔g5 50 ♖e6 ♖b5+.

I also had to kind of stop myself here. It occurred to me that giving up the a-pawn was a serious mistake. This was the pride of my position. You would only give it up if you absolutely calculated a forced win, and were 100 percent sure of it. The problem was my great weakness in chess is that I always have to look for forcing lines; I find it very hard to keep the position as it is. It's like some kind of existential angst that is constantly gnawing at my psyche, forcing me to make dubious decisions. However, the lesson I learned from Telford and applied here was: "Look, Gorm," I said. "Don't change anything. Keep the a-pawn, and keep making moves, and something will eventually crop up." Patience, that was the key.

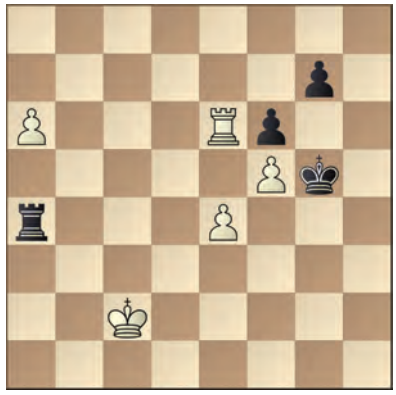
43...♔g5 44 ♖b6 ♔g4 45 ♔d3 ♔g5 46 ♖c6 ♖a3+ 47 ♔c2!?

Again trying to show that I was patient.

47 ♔c4 was also sufficient for the win. I just wasn't sure in the game if I could afford to give up any pawns on the kingside, because my calculation was so bad. Amazingly, 47...♖a4+ 48 ♔b5 ♖xe4 49 a7 ♖e8 50 ♖c5 g6 51 fxg6+ ♔xg6 52 ♔c6 f5 53 ♖a5 ♖a8 54 ♔b7 ♖xa7+ 55 ♔xa7 was the kind of position I was unsure about when looking from afar. Would my king get back in time?

I guess all this shows is that my understanding of basic endings is quite poor for a grandmaster. White gets his king back easily, because the problem for Black is that it takes time to push his king and pawn up the board: he has to take one move for the pawn, then one move for the king, etc. 55...♔g5 56 ♔b6 ♔g4 57 ♔c5 f4 58 ♔d4 ♔f3 59 ♖a2 ♔g3 60 ♔e4 f3 61 ♖a3 is one winning variation.

47...♖a4 48 ♖e6



48...g6

I am now threatening to march my king up the board so this is his only source of counterplay, because as we've already discussed, attacking the e-pawn doesn't work for Black. 48...♔f4 49 ♔b3 ♖xe4 50 ♖xe4+ ♔xe4 51 a7 loses for Black, of course.

49 ♔b3 ♖a1 50 fxg6 ♔xg6 51 ♔b4 ♔g5

51...♔f7 52 ♖c6 ♔e7 53 ♔c5 also looks hopeless for Black. He cannot approach any further with his king, as f6 will be hanging.

52 ♔b5 f5 53 exf5 ♔xf5 54 ♖e3

This version of the king rook and pawn is hopeless for Black, as his king is cut off too far from the action.

54...♖b1+ 55 ♔a4 ♖b6 56 ♔a5 ♖b1 57 ♖a3 1-0

My opponent was quite unhappy after the game, perhaps understandably, as the ending really should have been a draw. Adam is an underrated player and drew with Black in the last round against the top seed Jonathan Hawkins. He told me in the bar afterwards (I was on diet cokes) that he was running at 2370 on the live rating list, and in his own words was a monster with White. According to him, he would beat me by 'plus one' in a 15-game match where he was White in every game. Certainly a possibility, and I wonder if anyone out there is desperate enough that they would sponsor such a match?

The New Guard

Is it clear who the best players are anymore? Simon Williams played a listless game in round one and was easily beaten by Nottingham teenager Jonah Willow – a big upset on paper. In truth Simon was unfortunate because he had acquired food poisoning before the tournament had even begun. On the night before the first round, he had ordered a battered sausage from one of the many chippies that line the sea front in Hastings. The sausage according to Simon had looked grey and tired, and did its damage: tired old sausage 1, visiting GM 0.

Eventually the Ginger GM was forced to withdraw altogether from the event due to a serious family illness, although I also wondered if his loss to Jonah Willow could be part of a pattern that I believe we'll see emerge over the next few years, where it won't be clear who the best players are anymore. Young players like Jonah Willow, Conor Murphy and Adam Taylor seem to be very good to me and readily capable of replacing a declining force of senior grandmasters like myself, whose ratings decline year on year.

I certainly had my hands full when I played Conor.

C.Murphy-D.Gormally
Round 4
Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 f3 e6 7 ♗e3 ♗e7 8 ♕d2 ♘c6 9 0-0-0 0-0 10 g4 ♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 b5 12 g5 ♘d7 13 h4 ♗b7 14 g6?!

A well-known attacking device for White in these kind of positions, and in this almost equally well-known theoretical position, it feels slightly premature. I think my opponent just felt slightly uncomfortable in this position, because he doesn't really play the white side of the Open Sicilian and certainly didn't expect me to play this line. When we feel uncomfortable, we often try to force the issue as soon as possible, because the existing state of affairs isn't desirable for us. As such, we can see that patience is once again very important. White makes a slight mistake, because he lacks patience.

14 ♔b1 ♖c8 15 a3 ♘e5 16 ♕e3 ♘c4 17 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 would be a more normal continuation. This was debated, for example, in a game between Veselin Topalov and Garry Kasparov.

14...fxg6!

This is why I don't think 14 g6 is very good. The black rook already becomes very active on the f-file.

14...hxg6? 15 h5! would play into White's hands That's the idea, play g6 and then h5 with tempo. Black would either be forced to open the h-file or allow White to play h6, either of which would give White serious attacking chances: for instance, 15...g5 (15...gxh5 16 ♖xh5 just looks very dangerous too, as White is threatening ♕h2) 16 h6! g6?? 17 h7#.

15 ♗h3 e5 16 ♗xd7

16...exd4!

This is the principled line to play. Leaving White with the light-squared bishop means there is more danger – both in an attacking sense and that White can often dominate the d5-square – but it felt like the right way to fight for the win.

At Hastings when I was calculating variations I was trying to play devil's advocate a lot of the time. So when I was looking at variations, I was constantly questioning myself – is there anything wrong here? What if he does this? I think that's a sensible way to approach a chess game, constantly undermining your assumptions. That way you strive for objectivity.

In the past, I would have dismissed the idea of leaving White with the light-squared bishop, because it looked so dangerous. Playing devil's advocate here though, it seemed to me that I couldn't see why taking on d4 was losing by force for Black, so rather than relying on tired old generalisations, I thought it was sensible to believe in my calculations.

Charlton and Cambridge University FM Conor Murphy might have been the 15th seed at Hastings, but finished joint first, losing only to Danny Gormally and beating GM Sarunas Sulskis.

16...♕xd7 17 ♗xe5 also didn't seem very clear to me, although it's possible that it favours Black. Certainly 17...♖xf3! 18 ♗xd6 is something of a mess.

17 ♗e6+ ♔h8 18 ♕xd4 ♖xf3 19 h5!

Obvious, but setting Black severe practical problems.

19...gxh5

I seriously considered 19...♗f6? 20 hxg6 h6 21 ♕xd6, even though it gave back two pawns, because the resulting set-up looked quite safe for Black. However, there is still danger lurking here, as shown by the variation 21...♕xd6 22 ♖xd6 ♗xc3? 23 ♖d7! and White wins. In truth, I ended up dismissing this variation because it seemed to me that Black was not so badly off that he should be forced to go for a line where he goes from being a pawn up to a pawn down. An engine would never play like this, so why should I?

20 ♖xh5 ♗g5+ 21 ♔b1 h6

The bishop feels neatly anchored on g5, though of course I have to be constantly alert for ideas of ♖d1-h1 followed by taking on h6.

22 ♘d5!?

22 ♖g1!? ♕f6 23 ♕d1 ♗e3 is probably survivable for Black, although it looks quite scary.

22...♗c8!

An accurate retreat – although this leaves White with the unbreachable knight on d5, it felt more important to immediately get a rook to the c-file. Besides, 22...♗xd5? 23 ♕xd5 just looked very dangerous for Black: White already has a threat of taking on g5, as the rook on a8 would be hanging, as well as of playing e4-e5! hitting the wandering rook on f3.

23 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 24 b3?!

My opponent offered a draw with this move, but as so often in such cases, the draw offer was accompanied with a mistake.

I was most concerned about 24 ♕g1! and if he had played this move and offered a draw, my coward self would have gladly accepted. The idea is to play ♕g4 at some point, and then play the rook from d1 to h1. I was very worried that he would play 24 ♕g1, but in fact the all-seeing engine doesn't fear this particularly, and gives at least equality for Black: 24...♖c4 25 b3 ♖c5! would be a sensible continuation, where it's all to play for (if not 25...♖xe4? 26 ♕g2).

24...♕e8?!

Now I felt obliged to play on, which I did with this move, which practically forces him to sacrifice the exchange.

It felt like 24...♕e8 was the move to decline the draw, but in fact I had missed something in my calculations, and much more preferable was 24...♕f8!, which would have crucially kept control of the f-file. Now 25 ♖xg5 hxg5 26 ♖h1+ ♔g8 27 e5 obviously doesn't work for White, because of 27...dxe5 28 ♕xe5 ♖e8 when Black retains control.

25 ♖xg5!

Pretty much the only move. When playing 24 b3 Conor had missed that 25 ♖dh1? was

Now in his early 40s, Danny Gormally wasn't going to allow the odd grey hair or realisation that he was the senior British Grandmaster at Hastings prevent him from having a fine result.

impossible here because of the crude and winning reply 25...♕xh5!. I would have been very happy to see 25 ♖hh1 ♕e5!; Black gains complete control over the position and also has designs of attacking c2 at some point.

25...hxg5

Now I started panicking because I suddenly saw White could play 26 e5! when Black seemingly has to walk a tightrope to even make a draw: 26...dxe5 (26...♕xe5 27 ♕xe5 dxe5 28 ♖h1+ ♔g8 29 ♘e7+ ♔f7 30 ♘xc8 wins a piece for White, although the play is tricky after 30...♔e6, since Black's g-pawn is quite strong and the knight on c8 isn't doing anything for the time being; the engine gives this as about equal) 27 ♖h1+ ♔g8 28 ♕g4 ♖f7 29 ♕h3 ♖a7! and now White has nothing better than to force a draw with 30 ♕h7+ ♔f7 31 ♕f5+ ♔g8.

26 ♖h1+ ♔g8 27 ♕a7?

This was the last chance for 27 e5!, which would have transposed to the lines given above.

27...♖f7 28 ♕e3

28 ♕xa6 had perhaps been his intention, but is crushed by 28...♖xc2!.

28...♕e6

Black has consolidated.

29 ♕xg5 ♖cf8

Exchanging rooks is now threatened, which would take the danger out of any attack. To avoid this White is forced to retreat his knight, but that allows Black to win yet another pawn.

30 ♘e3 ♕xe4 31 ♕h5 ♖f3 32 ♕h8+ ♔f7 33 ♕h5+ g6 34 ♕h7+ ♔e8 35 ♖h4 ♕xe3 36 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 37 ♖e4 ♖f1+

I saw that 37...♕c3! was winning here, but it's always nice to finish the game with an old-fashioned king hunt.

38 ♔b2 ♕c1+ 39 ♔c3 ♖8f3+

39...♖c8+ 40 ♔b4 ♕d2+ 41 ♔a3 ♕a5+ 42 ♔b2 ♖xc2+! was another way to win.

40 ♔b4 ♕d2+ 41 ♔a3 ♕a5+ 42 ♔b2

42...♖xb3+! 43 axb3

It's mate too after 43 cxb3 ♖f2+ or 43 ♔xb3 ♖b1#.

43...♕a1# 0-1

Giving Yourself a Platform

I think when you're competing at something, you need to give yourself a platform, a basis on which your ability can show itself. I lose chess games for a number of reasons. One of them is poor opening choices. For example, in the previous year's Hastings, I had been paired against the top seed Deep Sengupta in the last round. A difficult pairing under the best of circumstances and when he slayed my Najdorf with the 6 ♗g5 variation, it made me question whether I should even play the Sicilian at all, given my lack of opening knowledge these days, combined with a rapidly declining memory.

I got a bit of criticism for playing the Petroff in a few quarters at this year's Hastings. However, recently I've had success with that opening. I think if you're a good chessplayer, you should be able to play any opening well. Gone are the days when players had a clearly definable style. Now you should be able to play anything, and the advantage of the Petroff over the Najdorf was that I seemed far less likely to be busted right out of the opening.

That was what I was looking for, some kind of platform, because I've always had an ability to find, unusual, dynamic moves. The problem was I'd often lose in the opening, so never get the chance to show that ability. If I could achieve that 'platform', then anything was possible. The problem with the Petroff was that I was still unfamiliar with many of the variations, and Alexander Cherniaev was to catch me out.

A.Cherniaev-D.Gormally
Round 6

23 ♗f4?

'The Chern' had this planned and didn't adjust to my last move, which was a blunder, losing the game at once.

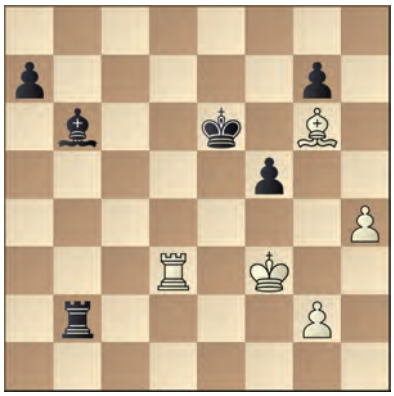
Under pressure in a difficult position, I had just played 22...♘e7? and then to my horror realised that White could win on the spot with 23 ♘xf7! ♗xf7 24 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 25 ♕xf7. Black is busted. White is simply threatening ♖e3-h3, or even ♖b3-h3, and there's simply nothing that Black can do, as the knight is pinned on e7, and if 25...♘d5 26 ♕h5+.

I think in the old days Cherniaev would have found this variation, but as we get older, we begin to lose some of that ruthlessness. Admittedly he only had about 10 minutes left

to the time control, but even so this was a big miss. White's idea is so strong than even playing it the other way around with 23 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 24 ♘xf7 is winning.

23...♕a5!

Taking advantage of the fact that White cannot take on b7 with his rook, as this would leave the other rook *en prise* on e1. After further adventures, we reached a rook and opposite-coloured bishop endgame where I was pressing for the win:



63 g4!?

An interesting practical choice from Cherniaev. Having before looked diffident, as if to provoke a mistake, he now started to look very confident, striding around the demonstration area with hardly a care in the world. Indeed, I think he looked so confident that it bluffed me out of the continuation that I had intended to play. I also think when your opponent is putting on this kind of body language, they are almost saying 'Come on this is all so obvious that I have a draw now. You should get on with your move!'

You simply have to take a step backwards, ignore the opponent and focus on the calculation. Here I simply didn't. I was reacting to what he was doing. With hindsight this was a bit of bluff by the Chern.

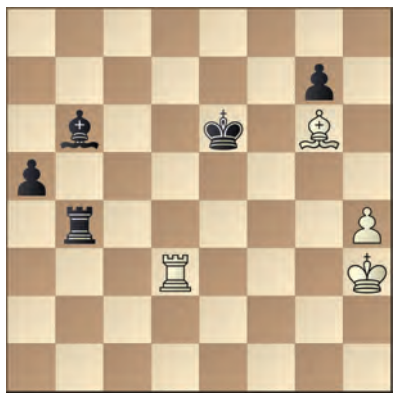
63...fxg4+?

63...♖f2+! 64 ♔g3 f4+ 65 ♔h3 is the line I really should have gone for. That's what I had intended in advance, and why I thought he couldn't play 63 g4 at all. Except in the game I felt tired, we were into the sixth hour of play, and I thought there was every chance I'd blunder and lose this. I could imagine variations where he somehow wins the g-pawn with his rook, and then gets going with his g- and h-pawns.

The advantage of the variation that I chose in the game is that Black can push for a run with zero risk. I feel, though, this way of thinking is unduly negative. Black would have to play very badly to lose this position. Essentially I lost my nerve here, and backed off a line I instinctively felt was best.

The other question is whether I have a good follow-up after 65 ♔h3 and getting tired, and spurned on by a bored-looking Chern, I didn't see anything particularly convincing. However, 65...♖f1! is a good starting point. This has a clear threat of playing ...f3-f2: 66 ♗e4! (a good defensive move, covering the f3-square; 66 g5? f3 wins for Black, while after 66 ♔g2 ♖g1+ 67 ♔f3 ♔e5 68 g5 ♗d4 White is getting gradually squeezed) 66...♖e1! 67 ♗c6 (or 67 ♗g6 ♖e3+ 68 ♔g2 f3+ 69 ♔f1 ♔e5) and now going into the pure bishop ending with 67...♖e3+! is winning: for example, 68 ♖xe3+ fxe3 69 ♗b5 a5 70 ♔g2 a4 71 ♔f3 a3 72 ♗c4+ ♔e5 73 ♔e2 ♔d4 74 ♗g8 ♗d8 75 g5 ♗e7 76 ♗f7 g6! 77 ♗a2 ♗d6 78 ♗f7 ♗g3 and the win is clear.

64 ♔xg4 ♖b4+ 65 ♔h3 a5



Black is still better, of course, but the problem is that with the reduced material, White's drawing chances go up exponentially.

66 ♗e8 ♗c5 67 ♗d7+ ♔e5 68 ♗c6 ♗e7?

Blundering my a-pawn doesn't help.

69 ♖d5+ ♔f4 70 ♖xa5 ♖b3+ 71 ♔g2 ♗xh4 72 ♖a4+ ♔g5 73 ♖a5+ ♔f6 74 ♗f3 g5 75 ♖a4 ♗e1 76 ♖e4 ♗d2 77 ♗g4 ♗f4 78 ♔f2 ♖g3 79 ♗f3 ♔f5 80 ♖a4 ♖h3 81 ♖a5+ ♔f6 82 ♖a6+ ♔e7 83 ♔e2 ♖h2+ 84 ♔d3 ♖b2 85 ♔e4 ♖b5 86 ♗h5 ♗c1 87 ♖c6 ♖b4+ 88 ♔e5 ♗b2+ 89 ♔f5 ♖b5+ 90 ♔e4 ½-½

With all the endless books on strategy, opening theory and so on, it's easy to lose sight of why you play chess: you play chess to checkmate the other guy's king. In round seven I played the talented Dutch player Koen Leenhouts. It was an exciting game, because at one point he threw the kitchen sink at me.

Prior to this game, I had got bogged down in draws, so it was essential to win, but I was also very nervous, because I was not only in contention to win the tournament, but also leading outright in many rounds. I really felt the pressure and was taking it so seriously that I didn't even go out for new year. The thought of sitting there in a busy pub, sipping on a Tango, didn't fill me relish. Given the circumstances, it was essential to finish the tournament off powerfully. Indeed, I held my nerve, defeated Leenhouts and so remained the sole leader.

Russian GM Alexander Cherniaev is a regular visitor to the UK and was another to join the six-way tie for first at Hastings. 'The Chern' sometimes looks bored in a bid to provoke a mistake.

A Blip for the Hawk

A game that I think, with the benefit of hindsight, was important for the final tournament standings was Jonathan Hawkins against Conor Murphy. Going into the game you'd have it down as a banker white win, except it didn't go to the script.

Jonathan Hawkins was a late entry to the tournament, and I must admit my first emotion when he entered was: 'that's first prize gone'; except maybe over the last two tournaments Hawkins hasn't quite been on the same form that we've come to see from him. Some seem to claim this is indication of a more general malaise, but I think it's more just a temporary blip. It's true that when you do coaching, like Hawkins does full-time now, it does take away some energy from the playing side. Anyway, he had an interesting if short game against the surprise package of the tournament, Conor Murphy:

J.Hawkins-C.Murphy
Round 7

21...g5!?

This is certainly a modern way of handling the position. It's probably true that back in the 1950s they would never dream of making such a move. Nowadays because of the influence of computers, play is much more concrete; either a move works, or it doesn't work. You see players like Caruana make these kind of moves a lot, and it filters down to other players as well.

22 ♕g4 f5!

A very concrete follow-up. At the cost of weakening his king even further, Black forces White to either give up a piece, or open the f-file. The Hawk told me later that he had been hoping for 22...♘xe5?! 23 ♕e2! when White has multiple threats: ♘xc5, ♘xg5, ♗c3 etc.

23 ♕h5!

23 exf6 ♘xf6 24 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 is very comfortable for Black.

23...fxe4 ½-½

Watching from the adjacent board I saw Murphy offering a draw, followed by Hawkins accepting immediately, which surprised me. Why not take a moment to look around? White can take the perpetual at any moment.

I was relieved as I was leading the tournament at this point and was expecting Jon to finish the tournament very strongly. I had painful memories of his 5/5 finish in the British Championships at Coventry, for example. When you're up there, you're always thinking: 'What's the top seed doing? What's the best player doing?' They always seem to find a way to get back into it.

It also occurred to me that my opponent in the same round, Leenhouts, would just be getting going as White in this position. Moreover, 24 ♕g6+ ♔h8 25 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 26 ♗xg5! looks very dangerous for Black to me, even if there is a defence:

a) 26...♕e8? was the move that Hawkins was worried about. This natural defensive idea allows White to carry out a very powerful further sacrifice with 27 ♖xd5! ♗xf2+ 28 ♔h1 exd5 29 ♗h3 ♘c5 30 ♗f6 ♖xf6 31 exf6, with multiple and probably winning threats, as shown by 31...♕f7 32 b4!.

b) 26...♕c7!? is another possible line of defence: 27 ♖xd5 exd5 28 ♗h3 ♖ae8 is objectively equal.

c) 26...♖xf2!27 ♕g6+ (White has to bail out now; 27 ♔h1? ♕f8 would win for Black and 27 ♗xd8? is also bad after 27...♖f6+) 27...♔h8 28 ♕h6+. So, with best play it would have ended in a draw anyway, but if Jon had seen the idea of 27 ♖xd5 and 29 ♗h3 he surely would have tried it, because White risks nothing, while by contrast it would be very easy for Black to go wrong.

Trusting Your Calculation

As could be seen from some of the previous games, if I was going wrong it was generally because I wasn't trusting my calculation enough. I wasn't always believing in my instincts, which in general tended to be fairly good. I've even discussed before, in various articles and video courses, the importance of trusting your instincts. So why the same old doubts?

Perhaps it's because deep down, I still don't believe in myself. Someone asked me on Twitter why I was taking quick draws. I replied that I didn't want to take quick draws, but the pressure of having no money meant that I ended up becoming too cautious. I was afraid to lose, because it might destroy all momentum, and mean that I would end up winning nothing; an intolerable situation when you're completely broke.

I do remember having this conversation with myself before the last round, where I held a half-point lead on 6½/9. Normally with a half-point lead you'd be assured of some kind of decent prize already, but here the scoring was so low that wasn't the case. I said to myself before the game, maybe I'll be a bit braver when I have a bit more money behind me.

That is not, of course, the true test of bravery. The true test is to put everything on the line when you are assured of nothing. As it was my opponent in the last round, Kjartansson, turned down my early and cowardly draw offer, which was something I was secretly relieved about, not because I felt like I was favourite, but because I felt like I should have a chance to win the tournament outright....which is what I very nearly did.

D.Gormally-G.Kjartansson
Round 10

21 f6?!

White is arguably winning after this, except the unusual material balance gives Black some hopes of resistance.

I think my nerves, combined with my opponent adopting the Cherniaev approach of looking rather bored in an effort to hasten my move, meant that I didn't spend as long on 21 ♖ad1! as I should have done. Instinctively I felt this was the way to win the game easily – because White is simply trying to win an extra piece. After 21...♖xd1 22 ♖xd1 exf3 23 ♖d8+ there are two moves for Black:

a) Kjartansson had stopped after 23...♔h7 24 ♖xc8 ♖xb4, and thought it was OK for Black, but for once I had actually seen further: 25 ♘c5 ♖xf4 26 ♘e6!. White will win a piece and is surely technically winning after 26...♖xf5 27 ♖c7 ♖f6 28 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 29 ♖e7+.

b) In the game I couldn't quite 'crack' 23...♔f7 which is why I ended up rejecting this continuation. My calculations stopped after 24 ♖xc8 ♖xb4 25 ♖c7+! ♔f6 (25...♔g8 26 ♘c5! ♖xf4 27 ♘e6 wins for White) 26 ♘c5 (in the post mortem I found a simple win here with 26 ♗d2!) 26...♖xf4 27 ♖xg7? (27 ♘e6? is also not convincing after 27...♖xf5 28 ♘xg7 ♖e5, but 27 ♖xc6+! ♔xf5 28 ♘e6 is an easy win for White.) 27...♖xf5. Basically I rushed through this variation, where White has various wins, rather than check my initial thoughts and calculation were correct.

21...♗xf6 22 ♘d2! g5 23 ♗e3 ♗xa1 24 ♖xa1 ♖xb4 25 ♘c5

This is very grim for Black. Materially speaking he's not that badly off, and that's the only good news. The bad news is that my pieces co-ordinate very well and all his pawns are weak. Better technique would have surely got me over the line from here.

25...a6 26 ♘dxe4?!

I wasn't sure about 26 ♘xa6! ♗xa6 27 ♖xa6 ♖c8, because it looks like Black is ready to push the c-pawn and obtain some counterplay. If I had looked further in this variation as well, I surely would have seen that 28 ♗c5! ♖b2 29 ♘xe4 crushes his hopes.

26 g4!?, preventing the bishop on c8 from getting into the game, was another way to play, which I was very tempted to try, and now wish that I had.

26...♗f5! 27 ♘c3 ♖c4 28 ♘e2 ♖e8

Although this is tactically a mistake, it does create a powerful idea of taking on e3 followed by taking on c5.

29 ♘b3?

Rather a meek and unnecessary retreat. Again nerves were playing a role, and I wasn't looking at all the candidate moves. My opponent greatly feared 29 ♘b7! and when he showed this move to me in the post mortem, I was so angry I nearly fled the analysis room in disgust. How could I miss it?

I think the other explanation, as well as nerves, was that I was simply getting very tired. I played the rest of the game in something of a fugue. This is one of the problems now I'm older, it just seems much harder to play well at the end of tournaments. You are much more vulnerable to fatigue. Here 29...♖b4 30 ♘d6 ♖f8 31 ♘xf5 ♖xf5 32 ♖xa6 ♖f6 33 ♘d4 is a technical win for White.

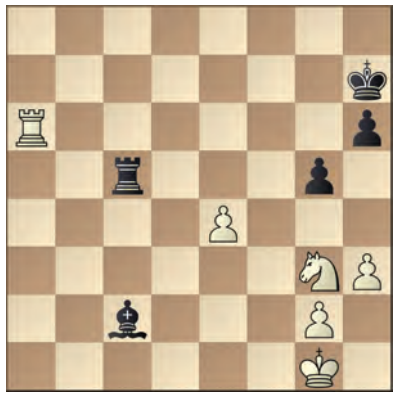
29...c5! 30 ♘g3

I saw this variation, where I end up a pawn ahead in the ending, was one that I could never possibly lose, so given how tired I was becoming, I wanted to lock in a decent prize. However, the braver move 30 ♖a5! would have retained a serious technical edge.

30...♗c2 31 ♘xc5

I thought about 31 ♘d2 ♖a4 32 ♖c1, but allowing him to retain his a-pawn didn't seem like a very good practical choice. 32...♖a2 33 ♗xc5 a5! is a mess and I could imagine in my tired state losing this quite easily.

31...♖xe3! 32 fxe3 ♖xc5 33 ♖xa6 ♔h7 34 e4 ♖e5 35 ♖a2! ♖c5 36 ♖a7+ ♔g6 37 ♖a6+ ♔h7



38 ♘h5?

The last chance to win the tournament presents itself – and I throw it away. If I had continued with my theme of playing devil's advocate, I would have thought: 'What's wrong with 38 ♘h5?' because I had enough time to work it out. Extreme nerves meant objectivity flew out of the window. I simply stopped calculating here.

If I had seen the hole in 38 ♘h5, I would surely have tried the more patient 38 ♔f2!, which would have set Black some serious problems to solve in his last moves before the time control. Even with more time, it's not easy to prevent White from winning a second pawn here: 38...♖c4! (38...♗d3? 39 ♖a7+ ♔g8 40 ♔e3 ♗b1 41 ♘f5 shows the dangers that exist for Black and 38...♖c7?, trying to cover the second rank, also loses: 39 ♘f5 ♗xe4 40 ♖xh6+ ♔g8 41 ♖g6+ ♔f8 42 ♖xg5 with a technical win for White) 39 ♖e6 (if 39 ♔e3 ♖c3+! and White has nothing better than to go back) 39...♖a4 is the computer's best defence, and it thinks a draw is more likely than a win. Nevertheless, these moves are not easy to find over the board.

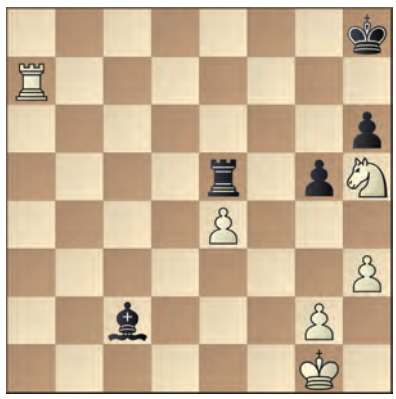
38...♖e5

'Oh good, he's blundered,' I thought.

39 ♖a7+

A wave of euphoria flooded over me, because I was convinced that I was winning by force now. Sadly this feeling wasn't to last.

39...♔h8!



39...♔g6?? 40 g4 and 39...♔g8?? 40 ♘f6+ are, of course, both to be avoided.

Only now did the awful and simple truth dawned on me that 40 ♘f6 ♗xe4 covers h7. You see what I mean about playing devil's advocate? Such a straightforward refutation of my idea only increased my pain. This was it, my final chance. I only made a half-hearted attempt to win after this, and the game was always drawn in any case:

40 ♖a6 ♗xe4 41 ♖xh6+ ♔g8 42 ♖b6 ♔f7 43 ♘g3 ♗a8 44 ♖a6 ♗b7 45 ♖a7 ♖b5 46 ♖a2 ♔g6 47 ♖d2 ♗d5 48 ♘f1 ♔f6 49 ♘e3 ♗e6 50 ♔f2 ♖b4 51 ♘d1 g4 52 h4 g3+ 53 ♔xg3 ♖g4+ 54 ♔f3 ♖xh4 55 ♘f2 ♗f5 56 g4 ♗xg4+ 57 ♔g3 ♖h5 58 ♘xg4+ ♔e6 59 ♖e2+ ♔d6 60 ♔f4 ♖a5 61 ♘f6 ♖a1 62 ♘e4+ ♔e6 63 ♘c3+ ♔d6 64 ♖d2+ ♔e6 65 ♖b2 ♖f1+ 66 ♔e4 ♖e1+ 67 ♔d4 ♔f5 68 ♖b8 ♖a1 69 ♖e8 ♖a5 70 ♖f8+ ♔e6 71 ♘e4 ♖a4+ 72 ♔e3 ♖a3+ 73 ♔f4 ♖a7 74 ♖f6+ ♔d5 75 ♖d6+ ♔c4 76 ♖d1 ♖h7 77 ♔f5 ♖h5+ 78 ♔e6 ♖h6+ 79 ♔d7 ♖g6 80 ♘d6+ ♔c5 81 ♘f5 ♔c4 82 ♘e3+ ♔c3 83 ♘d5+ ½-½

At the subsequent prize-giving I was probably quite rude, shaking my head in disgust when we all went up to collect the shared first prize, all six of us. I felt disappointed, not happy that I had to share first place. I felt like I should have won the tournament outright. It would have been a completely different feeling, an exultant one, not one where I had regrets. Nevertheless the tournament was a step in the right direction for me. Now if I can just stay away from the booze...

Leading Scores:

1-6 Oleg Korneev (ESP), Sarunas Sulskis (LTU), Danny Gormally (ENG), Martin Petrov (BUL), Alexander Cherniaev (RUS), Conor Murphy (IRL) 7/10

7-10 Jonathan Hawkins (ENG), Gudmundur Kjartansson (ISL), Vladimir Petrov (BUL), Adam Taylor (ENG) 6½.

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How Good is Your Chess?

by Grandmaster Daniel King

The most significant event of 2018 in the chess world took place in London when two machine-like opponents faced each other in a battle of iron wills. No, I'm not speaking of the autumn world championship match, but a contest between two markedly stronger players: *AlphaZero*, the creation of the DeepMind research team, and *Stockfish*, the strongest open-source chess engine in the world, originally the creation of Norwegian and Italian computer scientists, Tord Romstad and Marco Costalba.

Normally I would not be reporting on computer chess, but this match was special. *Stockfish* is fantastically strong, stronger than the best human players in the world, yet it was roundly defeated by a machine that played in quite a different way to other chess engines. *AlphaZero* played by its own rules. Literally. Given just the basic rules of chess, it played thousands of games against itself, rewarding itself for successes, and in so doing developed neural networks that allowed it to 'feel' and judge the potential of a given move. After just a few hours of such training ('reinforcement learning' to use the jargon), it became the strongest chess-playing entity in the world.

Now the really remarkable bit – and this has nothing to do with chess. Using the same algorithm, it was fed the rules of Shogi and conquered that game; and then did the same with Go – a game with a greater strategic complexity than chess. This triple crown of strategic board games is the real achievement of the DeepMind team: that the reinforcement learning tool can be applied to different fields, quite distinct from each other, without changing the architecture of the machine. DeepMind are already successfully applying their research to solve real world problems, notably in the field of medicine.

Has *AlphaZero*'s victory changed anything in the chess world? DeepMind have no plans to make *AlphaZero* commercially available – this was not the aim of their project – so it will not be possible for the top players to use the engine for their preparation. Having said that, the machine's flamboyant style could well give professionals a clue as to future directions for research.

I'm sure that by now you will have seen some of the games from the match and how often *AlphaZero* prizes piece activity above material concerns. As Garry Kasparov exclaimed, "I can't disguise my satisfaction that it plays with a very dynamic style, much like my own!" However, you might not have seen some of *AlphaZero*'s losses. Yes, there were a few (although the balance was very much in its favour), and it is from those games, just as much as from its victories, that we can learn about *AlphaZero*'s strengths and weaknesses.

Before we move on to the test game, let's take a look at two endgame disasters.

Stockfish 8 – AlphaZero
computer match, London 2018

Stockfish has just advanced the g-pawn two squares, so *AlphaZero* could capture *en passant* with a completely stable position – the extra pawn makes no odds. It's also possible to force a draw immediately with 100...c5 101 ♗xc5 ♗e6 102 ♖c3 ♖b2+ 103 ♔a3 ♖a2+ 104 ♔b4 ♖b2+, etc.

Instead, *AlphaZero* played **100...♖d2**, not a bad move, but ultimately it over-pressed, Stockfish won the pawn on h4 and rolled its own h-pawn home. *AlphaZero* must have judged that it still had sufficient winning chances to play the position on, but failed to appreciate the moment when it should have steered the game towards a draw.

The next game is even more curious.

Stockfish 8 – AlphaZero
computer match, London 2018

The machines have been going round in circles for some time – very little has changed in the position since move 46. Two humans would have abandoned any winning attempt a long time ago. But here *AlphaZero* pushed it too far with **103...h4?!**, which was snapped off, **104 gxh4**, and with supremely accurate play *Stockfish* won the endgame on move 126.

AlphaZero's generous approach to material often brought it success, even against the masterful defensive capabilities of *Stockfish* – but this is the flipside. Occasionally, very occasionally, it misjudged the position and pushed too hard to win. I find it interesting that both these losses occurred in endgames with rooks and bishops of opposite colours, situations that are notoriously difficult for machines (and humans) to assess accurately.

For our test game I would like to present another *Stockfish* victory, but rest assured I will not be asking you to divine best play in a hundred-move endgame. In fact, this is the polar opposite. *AlphaZero* is crushed – yes, crushed – straight from the opening.

How come? This game started from one of the standard opening positions that are given to machines in the Top Chess Engine Championship (TCEC). The DeepMind team wanted to test *AlphaZero* on various terrain to understand its capabilities, and this was

just one of a number of battlegrounds.

This game confirms what many players of the Classical French Defence have known for a long time: accepting the pawn in the Alekhine-Chatard Attack is fraught with danger – even for *AlphaZero*. Or perhaps especially for *AlphaZero*. A calculating monster such as *Stockfish* might have been able to defend these tactical positions, but for *AlphaZero*, playing more on feeling, and more inclined to play for activity than to dig in and defend, it's catastrophic. Which all goes to prove that when defending, there is no substitute for deep, accurate – some might say, brute-force – calculation.

I want to add that in demonstrating this loss I have no axe to grind against *AlphaZero*, or DeepMind. The absolute opposite. I am in awe of their achievement and have very much enjoyed looking through the games, particularly for the dynamic style they demonstrate. In my view these losses make for a richer picture, tiny blemishes that merely highlight where *AlphaZero* really excels.

Begin after the first diagram. Whenever Black has moved, stop and try to guess White's reply which will be on the next line. Try to analyse as much as you would in a game – it could earn you bonus points. The article will test your standard of play or, if you prefer, just enjoy a fine game.

Stockfish 8 – AlphaZero
computer match, London 2018
French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 e5 ♘fd7 6 h4 ♗xg5

There are many alternatives to accepting the gambit. I would favour either 6...♘c6 or 6...h6. If you have access to a database, I would recommend a look at the games of Morozevich, Zvjaginsev and Ni Hua if you'd like to take your research further.

7 hxg5 ♕xg5 8 ♘h3

This is the main line, but 8 ♕d3 is also highly dangerous, as proved by players such as Kasparov and Grischuk.

8...♕e7

This was the starting position for the machines, so it is appropriate that we also begin from here.

9 ♕g4

Three points. In practice, 9 ♘f4 (also *three points*) is seen as frequently, though perhaps after this game we will be seeing more of the queen move.

9 ♕d2 (*two points*) is less forcing, but still dangerous. 9...a6 or 9...♘b6 are reasonable replies.

9 ♗d3 (*one point*) commits the bishop prematurely. In reply, 9...♘c6 and, more extravagantly, 9...♕b4 both attack the d-pawn and highlight the problem with developing the bishop at this stage.

9...g6

Black could also play 9...♔f8, but from a practical viewpoint, the king is an easy target.

10 ♘g5

Three points. Not the most common move in the position, so a noteworthy choice by our fishy friend.

10 0-0-0 is the most popular move in practice and 10 ♘f4 comes in second (*three points* for both). Let's take a quick look at some representative play after both continuations:

a) 10 0-0-0 ♘c6 11 ♘g5 h6 12 ♗d3 ♘f8 13 ♘f3 ♗d7 14 ♖h2 0-0-0, Bartel-Ulybin, Bydgoszcz 2001. White's greater space provides some compensation, but Black's king is safe and he is over the worst.

b) Several games have reached the position after 10 ♘f4 ♘c6 11 0-0-0 h5 12 ♕g3 ♘b6 13 ♗d3 ♗d7, with Black close to bringing the king to safety on the queenside.

10...h6

10...h5 has been a more popular move, but White has every chance of regaining the pawn and maintaining a positional advantage after 11 ♕f4 ♘c6 12 0-0-0 ♘b6 13 g4 ♗d7 14 gxh5 gxh5 15 ♗e2 0-0-0 16 ♖xh5 ♖xh5 17 ♗xh5 (Bezgodov-Hmadi, Tunis 1997). White has a space advantage, the better bishop, the f7-pawn is a potential target, and there is a chance to hop a knight into f6.

11 0-0-0

Three points. This natural move is new.

In a game with colours reversed, the two machines also reached this position, but *AlphaZero* chose 11 ♗d3 – and came within a byte of winning: 11...♘c6 12 ♘xf7 h5 13 ♕g3 ♔xf7 14 ♗xg6+ ♔g8 15 ♗xh5+ ♕g7 16 ♕f4 ♘dxe5 17 dxe5 ♕xe5+ 18 ♕xe5 ♘xe5 19 f4 ♘g4 20 ♔d2, and White was better in the endgame, but *Stockfish* succeeded in holding – after 173 moves, *AlphaZero-Stockfish 8*, London 2018.

11...♘c6

12 ♘b5

Six points. This is the start of an all-out assault. If the knights retreat it is clear that the attack will be over, so you know your task: keep making threats, keep attacking.

Instead, 12 ♗d3 is too slow: 12...♘f8 13 ♘f3 ♗d7, and the king is about to escape.

12...♘b6

Before you look into this, I would ask you to consider your options against 12...♘f8. How would you respond? Answer on the next line.

Given an extra move – let's say ...a6, driving away White's knight from b5 – Black would be fine, therefore it is essential for White to keep up the pressure, and it is possible to do that with 13 c4 (*three points*). If 13...dxc4, 14 ♘e4 gets the knight into f6 with fatal consequences for Black. Therefore 13...a6 14 ♘c3, but then there is pressure on d5. For example, 14...♗d7 15 ♕g3 dxc4 16 d5 with a great initiative.

Back to the game, with Black's knight heading in the other direction.

13 ♖d3

Seven points. Really? Can such a brutal move be any good?

Let me tell you, if a calculating monster such as *Stockfish* plays it, then you can bet a sizeable chunk of your house on the answer.

Actually, 13 ♗d3 (*three points*) is also dangerous, with the idea 13...a6 14 ♘xc7+ ♕xc7 15 ♘xf7 and the enemy king is ripped open. Instead, Black has first to play 13...♘d8 in order to cover f7, and only then push the knight away with ...a6. It's precarious but,

with best defence, White does not have a way to break through.

13...h5

Before looking at this, we should check the provocative 13...a6. What next for White? Answer on the next line.

14 ♘xf7! (*three points*) is the move. Considering that the rook on h8 is *en prise*, then the knight has to go. Taking with the king allows 15 ♖f3+, therefore 14...♕xf7 15 ♖f3! (*another two points* if you got this far) 15...♕g8 (15...axb5 16 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 17 ♕f4+ ♔e8 18 ♕f6 is too quick for Black) 16 ♘xc7+ ♔d7 17 ♘xa8 ♘xa8 18 ♗d3 ♘e7 19 ♖f6. The game is not over, but White's assault on the kingside is hard to repulse. Black's minor pieces cannot transfer from one side of the board to the other quickly enough to defend.

14 ♖f3

Five points. The most vigorous move, carrying out the planned manoeuvre without delay. If the queen is taken, 14...hxg4, White reaches a winning endgame: 15 ♖xh8+ ♔d7 16 ♖xf7. As we have seen before, Black's pieces are too gummed up on the queenside to offer resistance. If 14...♖f8, there is a nice way of breaking through: 15 ♕f4 a6 16 ♘d6+ cxd6 17 exd6 ♕d7 18 ♘h7 f5 19 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 20 g4, and the major pieces will decide.

14 ♕g3 (*five points*) is also good.

14...a6

15 ♕g3

Four points. The brakes have to come on for a moment, although now if 15...axb5, White should crash on: 16 ♖xf7 ♕xf7 17 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 18 ♕f4+ ♔e8 19 ♕f6, with a persistent initiative.

The alternatives are less promising:

a) 15 ♖xf7? ♕xf7 16 ♘xf7 hxg4 17 ♖xh8+ ♔xf7 18 ♘xc7 ♖b8, and Black should eventually untangle.

b) Likewise, not 15 ♘xf7? hxg4 16 ♖xh8+ ♔d7.

c) 15 ♘c3? ♖f8. A prosaic defence of the f7-pawn, but sufficient. If 16 ♕f4 then 16...♘xd4 is possible as the knight on g5 is *en prise*.

15...♘d8

Before looking at the game continuation, let's consider 15...♖f8. There was something similar above, and 16 ♘d6+ is still powerful, with the idea 16...cxd6 17 exd6 ♕d7 18 ♘h7 f5 19 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 20 ♕xg6 followed by taking on h5 and carnage. By the way, in this variation 17...♕d8 would fail to 18 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 19 ♕xg6, but not 18 ♘h7? ♖h8 19 ♘f6+ ♔f8 and Black survives.

16 ♘c3

Three points. Instead, if 16 ♘xf7 ♘xf7 17 ♗d3 ♔d8, and in this case Black is wriggling away.

AlphaZero has succeeded in holding off the first attacking wave, but now faces a tough challenge: how exactly is it possible to bring the king to safety? The knight on d8 might hold the f7-pawn, but in so doing prevents queenside castling. *AlphaZero* decides that the kingside needs bolstering.

16...♘d7

17 ♗d3

Two points. With an obvious threat to take on f7 and then g6 with the bishop. Black has to respond with:

17...♘f8

18 ♖h4

Two points. It would be hard to resist this one. By the way, this could also have been played on the last turn, *balance your score* if that was your intention.

There was an alternative strategy which would have guaranteed the advantage: 18 ♕f4 (*one point*) 18...♗d7 19 g4, but Black would have a chance to crawl out with 19...♘h7 20 ♘xh7 ♖xh7. Nevertheless, White would be able to regain the pawn with a clear positional advantage.

18...♖g8

19 ♗c4

Eight points. That is precisely why *Stockfish* rejected 18 ♕f4 and 19 g4 – it saw something better; much, much better. The evaluation function must have been spiking at this point.

To understand this move we first need to find out what it threatens. Let's play a random move: 19...♖g7. It should be obvious: 20 ♗xd5 captures a crucial pawn and Black's position is on the point of caving in. If 20...exd5 21 ♘xd5 followed by ♘f6+.

The next obvious question is, what happens if the piece is captured? How would you respond to 19...dxc4? Answer on the next line.

One point for 20 d5, and if Black defends the f6-square with 20...♘d7, then 21 ♖xc4 keeps up the pressure. Black's king can't hold out in the middle.

All clear so far? Given there is a threat to take on d5, what happens on 19...c6, a belt and braces approach, preventing White from capturing on d5? Answer again on the next line.

20 ♘ce4 (*three points* if you found this) 20...dxe4 21 ♘xe4, and Black might have been able to defend against the check on f6 – but not d6. If 21...♔d7 22 ♘f6+ ♔c7 23 ♘xg8 wins the rook; and if 21...♘d7, first of all 22 ♖xh5, and the combination of the rook invasion and the check on d6 will be deadly.

These variations are simple for a chess engine, but for the rest of us, anything but. Seeing the concept of 19 ♗c4 is difficult in itself. You might be wondering, why not 19 ♘ce4 immediately? In this case it is less effective as 19...dxe4 20 ♘xe4 ♘d7, covers the f6-square – and the d6-square is covered by the pawn on c7.

Incidentally, 19 ♗c4 is not the only way to play the position – that might come as a relief to some of you. White can still play 19 ♕f4 followed by g4 (*three points*); and 19 ♖hf4 (*three points*) would force 19...♖g7 and maintains the pressure.

19...♕d7

20 ♘ce4

Three points. By now, a standard move! The *same score* for 20 ♘ge4.

20...dxe4

21 ♘xe4

One point. There is only one way for Black to prevent the thumping check on f6 – but it doesn't save him.

21...♘h7

22 ♖xh5 1-0

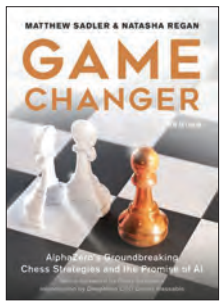
Three points. Exploiting the pin. At this moment the game was terminated.

I don't know the exact rules of the contest and who made this decision: the operators, or the machines themselves if they reach a certain numerical evaluation? In any case, I can imagine a dogged human playing on from this position, so let's go a little further.

22...gxh5 23 ♕xg8+ ♘f8 24 ♘f6+ ♔e7 25 ♕g5! is emphatic. Instead of taking the queen, White plays for mate. The threat is ♘h5+ and ♘g7+.

Instead of capturing the rook, the most testing is 22...♕xd4 and here 23 ♕g4 is the best move, threatening a nasty discovered check. Black can hang on with 23...♔e7 24 ♖xh7 ♕xe5, but a further accurate move is a killer: 25 ♖e3 with numerous threats. Let me give just one possible continuation: 25...♗d7 26 ♘c3 ♕c5 27 ♘d5+ ♔d6 28 ♕f4+ e5 29 ♕xe5+ ♔c6 30 ♕xc7 checkmate. All a bit obvious for a *Stockfish*.

I'm now looking forward to reading *Game Changer* by Matthew Sadler and Natasha Regan for a detailed review of *AlphaZero*'s play, due to be published in late January by New In Chess. They worked alongside the DeepMind team and I look forward to seeing a proper explanation of *AlphaZero*'s moves! This is already the front-runner for book of the year 2019.



Now add up your points:

0-16	Unlucky
17-32	Average Club Player
33-40	Strong Club Player
41-45	FIDE Master
46-55	International Master
56-65	Grandmaster

Ed. – If you have any questions regarding this article, please contact Daniel directly through his website www.danielking.biz.

Modern CHESS *Part Two*

GM Milos Pavlovic continues to ponder the impact engines are having on our game

My previous article seems to have caught readers' attention, which always makes me happy, as I do not see many debates on a subject that is actually present in today chess: the huge influence of the computer. I even wonder if a future, maybe even the next world champion will be the player who has access to a world's strongest computer?

The recent Carlsen-Caruana match demonstrated an important and clear difference between the classical and modern schools. Let us take a closer look.

M.Carlsen-F.Caruana
World Championship (Game 9), London 2019
English Opening

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 g3 d5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 ♗g2 ♗c5 7 0–0 0–0 8 d3 ♖e8 9 ♗g5 ♘xc3 10 bxc3

While watching live I was surprised by how easily Black took on c3, thereby making White's control of the centre very secure. Moreover, the half-open b-file is a definite asset. The opening was, of course, a reversed Dragon and in the Sicilian Defence itself there are only a few particular lines where White voluntarily exchanges on c6:

This is one line and the only other common and well-known one is:

We can consider these two reactions as being fully justified, because White speeds up his development in return for giving Black greater control of the centre. Such considerations were clearly missing in our world championship game. In the Sicilian Dragon, taking on c6 is almost never a good

idea for White, giving Black the half-open b-file and control over d5. This suggests that Caruana's entire plan was prepared with engines. Humans simply do not think in such a way as to trade on c3, but some are ready to break with classical knowledge, probably thinking that engines are simply stronger and so correct.

In the game Carlsen developed definite pressure, rushed and Caruana held the draw:
10...f6 11 ♗c1!? ♗e6 12 ♗b2 ♗b6 13 d4 ♗d5 14 ♕c2 exd4 15 cxd4 ♗e4 16 ♕b3+ ♗d5 17 ♕d1 ♗xf3 18 ♕b3+ ♔h8 19 ♗xf3 ♘xd4 20 ♗xd4 ♕xd4 21 e3 ♕e5 22 ♗xb7 ♖ad8 23 ♖ad1 ♕e7 24 h4 g6

25 h5?! gxh5!

Incidentally, a further example of modern chess. The capture is 'ugly', but also the best way to reduce the grip Black is under and steer play towards a drawn endgame.
26 ♕c4 f5 27 ♗f3 h4 28 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 29 gxh4 ♖g8+ 30 ♔h1 ♕f6 31 ♕f4 ♗c5 32 ♖g1 ♖xg1+ 33 ♔xg1 ♗d6 34 ♕a4 f4 35 ♕xa7 fxe3 36 ♕xe3 ♕xh4 37 a4 ♕f6 38 ♗d1 ♕e5 39 ♕xe5+ ♗xe5 40 a5 ♔g7 41 a6 ♗d4 42 ♔g2 ♔f6 43 f4 ♗b6 44 ♔f3 h6 45 ♔e4 ♗a7 46 ♗g4 ♗g1 47 ♔d5 ♗b6 48 ♔c6 ♗e3 49 ♔b7 ♗b6 50 ♗h3 ♗e3 51 ♔c6 ♗b6 52 ♔d5 ♗a7 53 ♔e4 ♗b6 54 ♗f1 ♔e6 55 ♗c4+ ♔f6 56 ♗d3 ♔e6 ½-½

Now I must present a position which has been rarely seen in tournament practice, but which was reached in the recent *AlphaZero* versus *Stockfish 8* match.

Let us analyse the position for a moment. We notice that White would not normally allow ...b5 so easily in such positions. Secondly, the plan with 14 ♗h6 seems a bit pointless from a human prospective, as everybody would instantly go 14...♗h8.

The first thing in the Benoni that you learn is that the bishop on g7 is a key piece for Black, but guess what? When given this particular position, my engine does not even give 14...♗h8 as one of the top three choices. Instead, 14...♗xh6? is given as best and was, indeed, played.

Nowadays engines have some huge ratings, but to me they can be weak, especially in such positions (only their tactics and calculation are good, and very good at that). I would be ashamed to show this position with 14...♗xh6 to any of my students. To me, only 14...♗h8 is an option. Now real question is, who do you trust?

The Issue of Memory

Another important aspect is the memorisation of engine lines. Chess is not a linear game; every main line has a side line, then a branch line and so on. Thinking that the engines have solved an opening line, and the only thing that one has to do is memorise it, is simply wrong in my opinion. Humans think in a different way from computers, so memorising long engine lines is often pointless, even if they are tactically accurate, as they tend to be forgotten and very quickly at that, in large part due to the fact that the moves are often not 'natural'.

In the last few months not once have I read of a grandmaster complaining how they forgot a line. Of course, it still happens and very often, but we should recognise as well that too much information can have the same effect as no information at all, as everything becomes very well known.

Studying the classics is still essential for anyone who really wants to know what chess is all about. Claiming instead, "I will only memorise engine lines" reminds me of a pupil in a school, learning poems by heart. That is, indeed, the first step; the crucial next step is for the teacher to explain what the poet meant, and then for the pupil to take on board the explanation.

Only once a player has been equipped with deep knowledge of the classics in chess can they make the distinction between which ideas of the engines are good, and which are not. I would also counsel against too much work with the engines. When you are at the board, playing a game, you will have to think for yourself and be creative; the engines are not at hand.

Countering the Engines' Influence

I often hear that in order to fight back against the concept of engine-dominated chess we must speed up play. That is far from illogical, but we don't want to land up only playing blitz games. Instead, I am reminded of one Christmas when I played at Hastings; the time control featured an additional 60 seconds, not the usual 30, from move one. With such an increment the whole main time control can be just 60 minutes for the whole game, or maybe 40 moves in 50 minutes followed by an additional 20 minutes.

Such a time control won't prevent some players from trotting out their computer-prepared lines, but time trouble will be avoided and the overall play should be more stable than in the current time scrambles, which tend to dominate play from move 30 to move 40, and that's even with 30 seconds being added each move.

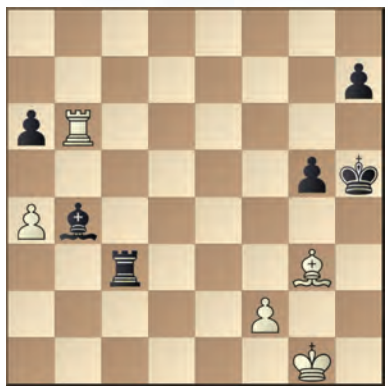
Find the Winning Moves

24 puzzles to test your tactical ability, with, as ever, the positions grouped in rough order of difficulty. The games come from various recent events, not least the London Chess Classic, Hastings, and the World Rapid and Blitz. Don't forget that whilst sometimes the key move will force mate or the win of material, other times it will just win a pawn.

Solutions on page 54.

Warm-up Puzzles

(1) P.Sowray–A.Balaji
London 2018
White to Play



(2) R.Van Kemenade–D.Gormally
British Rapidplay Ch., Ilkley 2018
Black to Play

(3) D.Miller–S.Williams
Hastings 2018/19
Black to Play

(4) Y.Han–J.Willow
British Rapidplay Ch., Ilkley 2018
Black to Play

(5) R.Bates–K.Kulon
4NCL, Daventry 2018
Black to Play

(6) M.Burke–R.Van Kemenade
British Rapidplay Ch., Ilkley 2018
Black to Play

Intermediate Puzzles for the Club Player - Solutions on page 54

(7) NN-S.Whitehead
York (blitz) 2019
Black to Play

(8) L.Butt-D.Fryer
Hastings 2018/19
Black to Play

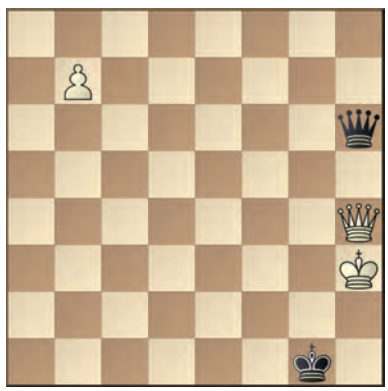
(9) N.Jaufarally-P.Tozer
London 2018
Black to Play

(10) T.Kueppers-N.Thatte
London 2018
Black to Play

(11) T.Wall-D.Gormally
British Rapidplay Ch., Ilkley 2018
White to Play

(12) A.Martinez-C.Hosdurga
London 2018
White to Play

(13) K.Lagno-Ju Wenjun
Women's World Ch., Khanty-Mansiysk 2018
Black to Play



(14) S.Grigoriants-M.Carlsen
World Blitz Ch, St Petersburg 2018
Black to Play and Draw

(15) N.Buksa-M.Garcia Martin
Women's World Rapid Ch., St. Petersburg 2018
Black to Play

Harder Puzzles for the Club Player – Solutions on page 54

(16) M.Harrington-C.Evans
Birmingham 2018
Black to Play and Draw

(17) D.Thomas-M.Donnelly
Leamington League, 2018
Black to Play

(18) K.Arkell-A.Stephan
London 2018
White to Play

(19) Gr.Moore-C.Nettleton
Hastings 2018/19
White to Play

(20) L.D'Costa-M.Cornette
London 2018
Black to Play

(21) L.Wu-K.Arkell
London 2018
White to Play

(22) M.Andersen-V.Babula
German Bundesliga 2018
White to Play

(23) S.Savitskiy-D.Bocharov
Khanty-Mansiysk 2018
Black to Play and Draw

(24) J.K.Duda-W.So
Internet (blitz) 2018
White to Play

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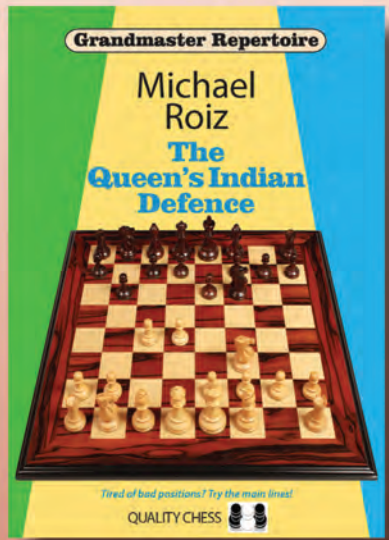

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Never Mind the Grandmasters...

Here come the amateurs - by Carl Portman (carl.portman@hotmail.co.uk)

The game of chess has been around for 1,500 years or so and in our lifetime it hasn't changed. The pieces move the same way as they did when we were kids and probably will do so for a long time to come. Stalemate might be erased from the rules if FIDE Vice President Nigel Short has is way – he has been an advocate of that for a few years now to my knowledge.

There is also the issue of draws. It really is weird that in our sport the participants can just stop play and agree a draw. Imagine that happening in other sports. Indeed, I am struggling to think of any other sport that does this – you wouldn't even get it in dominoes in the local pub.

However, some things have changed, and I want to mention a couple of developments that have affected us amateurs at the board. Clutter – that's my issue. Weekend tournaments, 4NCL, county games, you name it. There is so much junk at the playing table now that there is barely room for a scoresheet.

Once the scoresheet is placed by the board (it must be a scoresheet, not a scorebook because of possible 'cheating'), there is an adornment of other objects. They range from bottles of water and other liquids to chocolate bars, bananas, sweeties, lucky charms and, of course, mobile phones, usually in little green bags, which is also to prevent cheating and represents another aspect of a change in our game.

Certainly, the advent of technology has affected the way we behave at the board. The last game I played in the 4NCL, I looked at the tables immediately around me and it looked like a sale at Primark. There was collateral damage everywhere, including hats, scarves, various collections of pens and also the most recent (non-chess) books that people are reading – perhaps to make some statement about themselves.

Is it me, or do we need to stop this madness? You cannot even find space to put the spare queens or the pieces you have removed from the board. Can we just place the scoresheet and a pen on the table, and put all the other stuff in bags under the table? Actually, that doesn't really work either as there are already so many bags under and alongside tables that it is like sitting on a train. Players now use these 'comfort bags' as a barrier underneath which players can no longer 'accidentally' kick anyone when they are losing.

I have not mentioned the clocks yet. Room must be found on the table for these important instruments and this can be a challenge. Reaching to press clocks can sometimes mean knocking bottles or glasses of drinks over (we have all been there haven't we?), and then the whole game is disrupted more so than if ever a tiny mobile phone had gone off.

I still think the phone issue is a weird rule anyway. If someone really wants to cheat, they will. They could have two phones, put one on the table in the bag and trundle off to the lavatory with the other for a *Stockfish* comfort break. Cheats will always try to be ingenious in the way they carry out their dirty deeds.

I am more put off by those ridiculous wristwatches that beep on the hour, every hour. Why do people do that? How is that any less distracting than a phone beeping? We should have no noise whatsoever at the board. This includes coughing and sneezing which should invoke a small fine or five additional minutes on the clock for the opponent. Loud shoes definitely need to be dealt with. Anyone walking around in noisy footwear should be made to remove them and be fitted with 'chess slippers', manufactured for any floor to keep noise to a minimum.

If all of this noise reduction fails then maybe we should all take a leaf from the book of Mikhail Botvinnik who famously instructed his training partners to blow smoke in his face, in the days when smoking was allowed at the board. The idea was that he would be accustomed to this if and when it happened during a game. Imagine nowadays having to find space at your chess table for ashtrays as well – crikey.

Botvinnik also insisted upon a transistor radio being played loudly in the background during training sessions, so that he could get used to the noise. I admire him for that. Bobby Fischer meanwhile would throw his teddy out of the pram at the sound of one camera clicking. Chess attracts all sorts. Some players are not bothered about noise and others are. I seem to be more bothered about noise when I am losing, especially people slurping drinks or someone in the room opening and then munching on a packet of crisps.

I would like to share a Botvinnik game which might hopefully appeal to juniors who perhaps only follow the games of more contemporary grandmasters such as Magnus Carlsen. The position looks rather cluttered (like our tables) after a few moves, but I particularly like the way that the 'Patriarch' navigates his way through the forest of pieces. It takes a mistake from his opponent for Botvinnik to win the game, but the spider must be ready to pounce at the exact moment that the prey shows itself.

M.Botvinnik-I.Kan
2nd matchgame,
Moscow Training Match 1954
Slav Defence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 dxc4

Sometimes people prefer 4...e6, which looks like it might concede the centre, but there's play for both sides. I don't see this played often these days in weekend tournaments or club games, but perhaps I am not attending the right tournaments.

5 a4

White has to engage the queenside pawns and this is the way to do it. Many amateur players (that's me!) would be tempted to play 5 e4 immediately. That's where looking at master games helps. 5 e4 certainly grabs the centre, but Black wants now to hold on to that extra pawn: 5...b5 6 a4 b4... and game on.

5...♗f5 6 e3

A very solid choice. It does block in the dark-squared bishop though.

6...e6 7 ♗xc4 ♗b4

Absolutely. Why not pin the knight indeed? Black would really like to play his knight into e4 and add to the pressure on c3, but White is going to release himself from that pin now.

8 0-0

The king slips into his gilded tent for a glass of Port, whilst his subjects ready themselves for a fight and possibly loss of their lives.

8...♘bd7

Black could also castle. Pillsbury said that you should castle because you want to or

because you must, not just because you can. This comment is food for thought during any game. How often do we castle simply by rote?

9 ♘h4 ♗g4

9...0-0 10 ♘xf5 exf5 is a popular line also, I discover. Then 11 ♕c2 g6 12 f3 is, once again, very solid.

10 f3 ♘d5 11 fxg4 ♕xh4

Here's a question: what would you play here as White, and why? I don't have all the answers, but I do know that I would eat up some serious clock time at this moment. Honestly, without turning a chess engine on, I fancy 12 ♗d2 to support c3, but this is not what Botvinnik played.

12 e4

This is the moment where a chess engine will tell you what should/could be played or not, but it won't explain the thoughts behind it like a strong master would sitting in front of you. The computer is not god...let's hear it for real people. By the way have you tried 'Decodechess' online? That's a program that will tell you the stories behind your moves.

12...♘xc3 13 bxc3 ♗xc3 14 ♖a3! ♗b4 15 ♖af3

OK, I can now see how strong White's centre is. Mind you, his pawn structure is questionable, having three pawn islands as he does. White has a lot of activity and mobility which counts for a great deal and, after all, Black has left his king in the centre of the battlefield.

15...♖f8 16 g5

It is just a little pawn move, but very important at that. Look at it as it challenges the black f-, g- and h-pawns, almost taunting them as would an irate dissident against a police line.

16...0-0-0

Finally the monarch is moved to relative safety, but there's lots of clutter on the battlefield. How should both sides proceed? What now is 'the plan' for either side?

17 ♕e2 ♕h5 18 ♖xf7

That's rather neat.

18...♕g6

Likewise, after 18...♕xe2 19 ♗xe2 ♖xf7 20 ♖xf7 ♘f8 the battle continues.

19 ♖xf8 ♘xf8

The black rook now threatens the pawn on d4.

20 ♕e3

It seems pretty level to me here, but the game will be over in another 15 moves. I wonder if Kan smoked? Did he blow any in Botvinnik's face?

20...♕e8

Now here I will confess that I did put the engine on and this move did not feature at all as a serious option. For the record it wanted to play 20...♗a5, but who among us would have played that over the board?

21 ♗b2 ♕e7 22 h4

I would play White here because I like the two bishops and the more active position. The smoke (and clutter) is clearing across sectors of the battlefield.

22...a5 23 ♖f3 ♘d7 24 ♕f2 ♖f8 25 ♔f1

Let's be honest. How many club players would play this? It seems to me that Botvinnik considered that now was the time to bring the king into play ready for the endgame. Me? I would be nervous because the queens are still on. Courage and calculation, that's what you need.

25...♔c7

Anything you can do Mikhail...

26 ♔e2 ♕e8 27 ♕g3+ ♗d6 28 ♕g4 e5 29 ♗e6 exd4 30 ♗xd4

It's still level on material here, but Black has to make a decision about where to put his knight – and he makes the wrong one. This is why I say that no one wins a game of chess; people only lose. If mistakes were not made, we could not capitalise, could we? I approve though, as I do not want perfection and continual draws in chess. Mistakes are what life is all about. Ask historians and inventors.

30...♘e5?!

He should have traded on f3 or gone in for 30...♘c5 31 ♖xf8 ♗xf8.

31 ♖xf8 ♕xf8 32 ♕f5

At this point Black commits an act of self-immolation. Maybe he was short of time? Who knows what the circumstances were that lead to this mistake which even I spotted.

32...♘g6??

Black hoists himself on his very own petard. It is now checkmate in three. Do feel free to play that out on your own board, but I shall give it anyway. OK, even after 32...♕xf5 33 exf5 b5 White is better, if indeed not winning, but at least Black would have had a few more moves to go.

33 ♕xa5+ 1-0

If 33...♔b8 (33...b6 34 ♕xb6#) 34 ♕a7+ ♔c7 35 ♗b6#. How pretty is that?

I must finish this column with a plea to chess organisers and players everywhere. Let's keep the clutter off the tables and give ourselves space to play. The chess world is concentrating so much on anti-cheating rules that it seems to have taken its eye off the ball regarding the actual immediate playing area for the protagonists. It isn't only our king that requires 'luft' – we need it too.

Mikhail Botvinnik,
A serious bloke,
Not distracted by noise,
Or plumes of smoke.

The Life & Death of Grandmaster Blimp

by Tim Wall

In the bad-but-fondly-remembered old days before the Internet, there was usually just one way to get the latest chess news: by reading it in a newspaper. In the UK, there were some great, insightful, well-reported chess columns, by the likes of Leonard Barden (*The Guardian*), Harry Golombek (*The Times*), Bill Hartston (*The Independent*) and Michael Stean (*The Observer*). These are the ones I remember most vividly, anyway.

For me, a geeky 12-year-old chess fanatic, waiting for the latest game from the 1978 world championship match in Baguio City, The Philippines, where Korchnoi and Karpov were duking it out in a John Le Carré/Cold War-style struggle to the death, it felt a little like standing on the harbour in 1840s New York, desperate for news of the fate of Little Nell in Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

Very often all that chess fans would get was the bare game score, maybe with a note about blunders or brilliancies, augmented a month or so later by some rudimentary (non-computer checked, of course) notes in BH Wood's *CHESS* magazine.

There was also a book on the Karpov versus Korchnoi match by a certain Raymond Keene, one of Korchnoi's seconds, who Korchnoi alleged violated his contract to rush it into print...

Forty Years Ago

To cut a long story short, at a tender age I became an avid collector of newspaper chess columns. At least in my own mind, anyway. When, in 1979, I ventured down to London as a rookie competitor in the National Junior Squad Championships, gripping under my arm my scrapbook of chess columns carefully cut out of newspapers, I was ecstatic to be in the presence of the great Barden (I was getting a lift back to another junior's house where I was staying, and the legendary chess journalist was in the same car). Unable to contain my excitement, I gushed: "Mr. Barden, I've collected all your *Guardian* chess columns," only to be crestfallen by the immediate, withering response: "Really, since 1956?"

Reader, an already shy teenager wished the ground would swallow me up then and there, scrapbook and all...

Yet as Roger Livesey would say in Powell and Pressburger's 1943 cult classic film, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, the story of an elderly British army general who is out of touch during WWII, yet was once a dashing young officer, that was "*forty* years ago" when warfare (like chess) was conducted according to different rules. Indeed, a lot in the chess news business has changed since then.

There is perhaps no clearer illustration of these changes than the coverage of the 2018 world championship match between Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana. We had live Internet coverage from a variety of excellent commentators: Judit Polgar, Anna Rudolf and Daniel King for the official World Chess website; Peter Svidler, Sopiko Guramishvili and the inimitable Alexander Grischuk for Chess24.com; Yasser Seirawan, Maurice Ashley & co. for the St. Louis Chess Club & Scholastic Center; and such stars as England's own Ginger GM, Simon Williams. And despite World Chess's attempts to restrict access to this commentary, they were all available free online on YouTube and other sites, giving chess fans a pleasant choice of different styles of commentary.

If you had the time and the inclination, you could watch all the action (more or less) live for hours on end, or later that evening simply watch the 'Test Match Special Highlights' version of each game (for about 15 to 30 minutes), presented by either Peter Svidler on Chess24, or Daniel King on his excellent 'Power Play Chess' YouTube channel. If you lived in Norway, you could even tune into Norwegian state TV for live coverage, complete with commentary aimed at the beginner-to-average player level.

The quality of all this, pretty much instant, commentary was generally fantastic: leading grandmasters explaining the Carlsen-Caruana games, while the viewers at home could access such analysis engines as *Sesse*, the Norwegian supercomputer, *Stockfish* et al.

Next was English GM and all-round Boy Scout Matthew Sadler, a few days after the match finished, popping up on YouTube with a series of amazing videos entitled, 'DeepMind's Alpha Zero on Carlsen-Caruana'. Sadler's helpful explanatory comments, imbuing the "Wizard of AZ" with human-like feelings, included such wonderful asides as: "I was wondering whether *AlphaZero* was feeling a little unwell at this point" (AZ was pointing out a brilliant defensive resource in Game 10 that would have escaped all bar a Petrosian or a Nimzowitsch).

After Sadler's videos came out, much of the *AlphaZero* analysis was quoted in a second edition of a straightforward, nicely explained book by German GM Niclas Huschenbeth, *Carlsen v Caruana, Duel of Giants* (independently published, 2018). The first edition had been a preview of the match, covering all Carlsen's and Caruana's games against each other before the London match.

Adding to the great treasury of chess analysis about the match, Chess24 in January came out with a fascinating 11-hour series of video conversations between three key members of Carlsen's team of seconds – Peter Heine Nielsen, Jan Gustafsson and Laurent Fressinet – in which they discuss the games, Carlsen's state of mind (as they saw it) when he offered a draw in Game 12, and their approach to preparation for the match. While the videos – available free to Chess24 Premium subscribers, or for $14.99 to everyone else – are undoubtedly for the connoisseur or expert, they provide excellent insights into the world champion's thinking, while also showing that within any such team there are always creative discussions with different points of view.

A Horse of a Different Colour

And then, bizarrely, amid all this great chess analysis, wise and often witty expert commentary, and high-tech wizardry, there appeared... a horse of a different colour.

Yes, none other than Raymond Keene, with his latest instant book, *Carlsen v Caruana, FIDE World Chess Championship, London 2018* (co-authored with IM Byron Jacobs, and published by Everyman Chess in December). The e-book version appeared on December 4th, within a week of the match finishing.

Perhaps, to call things by their proper names, and with a nod to the Powell & Pressburger film, I should dub Keene 'Grandmaster Blimp'. Unlike Roger Livesey's character in *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, however, Keene does not represent some long-lost era of chess chivalry. Rather, he is merely passing himself off as a knight of yore, all the while peddling the same repetitious, dubious homilies to chess history he has been rehashing for decades. Meanwhile, he looks increasingly out of touch with the latest developments in the chess media.

I have no doubt that Keene still has a certain following in the chess world, based mainly on his achievements of a generation ago (authoring or co-authoring brilliant tomes on the Modern, Pirc, Flank Openings and Nimzowitsch, and his undoubtedly strong play when he was a professional player, up until the early 1980s). However, it is no secret that Keene as a chess writer and journalist has milked that reputation for decades, recycling a lot of his own (and other authors') chess commentary and analysis,

often without any proper accreditation.

Satirical magazines *Private Eye* and *Kingpin* and others have documented the claims and allegations of the habitual plagiarism (and self-plagiarism) in Keene's *Times* and *Spectator* columns, while his 200(!) or so published books are similarly peppered with a familiar concoction of hackneyed history, self-aggrandisement and uncredited copy-and-pasting.

Unfortunately, the exact same tendencies can be observed on just about every page that Keene is associated with in this new book. Keene's main contributions are 'World Chess Comes to London', an article copied word-for-word from the summer 2018 edition of a magazine called *Synapsia*, a recycled 'History of the World Championship' from a 2000 book replete with various uncorrected errors, such as the "fact" that Alekhine died in 1946 in the Portuguese capital, Lisbon, and some sloppily put together introductions to the games. For Game 2, he even has the audacity to talk about "Sitzfleisch", the German expression for putting in hours upon hours of bum-numbing hard work, when referring to Carlsen's 115 moves in pursuit of an elusive endgame win in the previous game.

For a record of Keene's misdemeanours in this book, I can do no better than recommend an online review entitled 'Meal Ticket', written by Olympiu G. Urcan, a Singapore-based chess scholar. Without spoiling it for you – and I urge you to read it, as it is far more entertaining than a Keene pot-boiler – let me just quote two brilliant takedowns*:

"[Keene] omits important world championship matches in his recital, such as those contested by Carl Schlechter and Efim Bogoljubow, and the book misinterprets events during the Carlsen vs. Caruana match itself. As footage and the actor's own account reveal, Woody Harrelson's toppling of Caruana's king was not an accident, as the authors believe. It was a pre-planned gag."

And later: "The repeated usage of "I (RDK)" is comical as Keene's cartoonish vanity is on full display throughout the book. To pick but one example, he preposterously writes: "In fact, while researching for this book, the curious fact came to light that I had personally organised every match in London which might be considered to have decided the world chess championship from 1872 up to 2018!" But why limit his field of glory to such a short period? Why not from the Jurassic Period to the Second Coming?"

Another bizarre fetish that Keene appears to have is the burnishing of his image by acquiring obscure (and somewhat spurious) titles. For example, while looking into Keene's literary record for this article, I came upon an interview he gave in April 2018 to a publication called *In-Sight***. Asked what his greatest personal achievement is, Keene replied: "I have been made a Count! So, I am His Excellency Raymond Dennis [Keene], Order of the British Empire (OBE), international chess Grandmaster, and Count of the Order of Torres Vedras, Portugal. I am the first person in the history of chess to be made a Count on account of his chess ability.

"It is spelled Torres Vedras. It means 'Green Towers'. Of course, 'Torres' in Portuguese is the same as a chess rook: 'Count of the Green Towers'. It's a genuine title awarded by the legal descendants of the Imperial House of Braganza in Portugal."

To put Keene's "genuine" title in context, the House of Braganza was deposed as Portugal's royal family a little while ago, in 1910 to be exact. And while we're fact-checking, Alekhine died in the Portuguese town of Estoril, not Lisbon. But then why would a Count of the Order of Torres Vedras bother to know that?

In mitigation, I should balance criticism of Keene with a few words about the book's other contributors. While Keene spent much of the world championship match enjoying the hospitality in the VIP area at The College, it was Jacobs, Everyman Chess's commissioning editor, who actually did the graft of analysing the games. Given the short time frame to publish the book, Jacobs did a decent job with the analysis, even if his focus on some key turning points was perhaps not as in-depth as by other commentators I mention above. We should also note the contribution of Nigel Short, who wrote a quite insightful 380-word foreword. Perhaps somewhat strangely, as Urcan points out, he does not mention the authors at all.

At the end of the *Colonel Blimp* film, Roger Livesey's character has something of an epiphany, realising that the old ways of doing things are over and that warfare must be fought using modern methods, not harking back to outdated traditions. Would it be too optimistic to hope that Grandmaster Blimp will move with the times, and write something more original for a change?

To end on a positive note, and to show that studying the games of the Carlsen-Caruana match is much more fun than reading another dreadful hack-job by Keene, here are a couple of fun moments from the match, as seen by Team Carlsen and the dynamic duo of *AlphaZero* and Matthew Sadler:

F.Caruana-M.Carlsen
World Championship (Game 8), London 2018

Matthew Sadler: "This move was what prompted me to go with this theme of Magnus wanting to have a go at Caruana's king, because I predicted 18...g5?. It's such an un-Magnus move, he's the guy who keeps his position together and improves his pieces and plays this beautiful chess. And this is really the kind of move that I might play – going for the king, whatever the cost! This is the move of someone who really wants to put his opponent's king under pressure. A*lphaZero*'s evaluation really drops heavily for Black here."

Grandmaster Raymond Keene OBE, aka the Count of the Order of Torres Vedras.

F.Caruana-M.Carlsen
World Championship (Game 8), London 2018

Peter Heine Nielsen: "After the best move, 28 ♕d5, Magnus was planning simply 28...♖ab8. It looks quiet, but White will find it difficult to prevent 29...♖xc7 30 ♖xc7 ♘f3+ or ♘d3+."

Jan Gustafsson: "At this point we were discussing whether to prepare for Game 4." Peter Heine Nielsen: "No. I told you to do it, and you refused."

* Both passages from Olympiu G. Urcan's article, "Meal Ticket" www.patreon.com/posts/meal-ticket-23138934

** https://in-sightjournal.com/2018/04/15/keene-one/

Dangerous Moments

Amatzia Avni has found some striking examples on the theme *embarras de richesses*

embarras de richesses
noun – a superfluous abundance of options, from which one finds it difficult to select.

When players find a candidate move which they assess as distinctly superior to other alternatives, their decision is easy. However, when players have several good moves at their disposal, they sometimes get confused, as it seems that all roads lead to Rome and any move would obtain the desired result. It is precisely here that danger lurks.

M.Najdorf-W.Heidenfeld
Torremolinos 1961

Black's pawn formation is shattered and his pieces are scattered without harmony. White holds a decisive positional advantage and from now on he can choose between many roads to victory.

26 ♖h1 ♖ac8 27 ♕b2

Effective too would have been 27 ♖xh6 ♖xc2 28 ♗xd6 ♗xh6? 29 ♗xe5+ ♗g7 30 ♘g6+.

27...♕f6 28 ♘h5 ♕g6 29 f4 ♗f6 30 ♘xf6

Or 30 fxe5 ♗xe5 31 ♘f4, winning.

30...♖xf6 31 ♗xd6?!

Faced with so many good options, White begins to drift. 31 fxe5 appears risky on account of 31...f4, but then 32 ♖xh7+! wins outright.

31...♖xd6 32 fxe5?

32 ♕xe5+ ♕f6 33 ♗xb7 would have been simple and strong.

32...♕g7 33 ♗xb7?

33 ♗f3 was the lesser evil.

33...f4!

The turnaround.

34 exf4 ♗h3+! 35 ♔h2 ♖h6 36 ♗xc8? ♗f1+ 37 ♔g1 ♕xg3+ 38 ♔xf1 ♕f3+ 0-1

R.Dzindzichashvili-V.Vainberg
U.S. Amateur Team Ch. East, Parsippany 2001

18 gxf5 ♘xd3+ 19 ♔b1! ♘xe5 20 fxe5 exf5? 21 ♕f4

The first miss. 21 ♘xf5 ♖xf5 22 ♕xd5+ would have been simple and strong.

21...♖ae8 22 e6 ♕f6 23 ♖g5 g6 24 ♖dg1 ♔h8 25 h4

Another excellent chance disappears in the shape of 25 ♖xg6 ♖g8 26 ♖6g5 or even better still, 25 a4! bxa3 26 ♖xg6.

25...♖e7 26 h5 ♗e8 27 b3 ♖g7 28 hxg6

28 ♘xf5 was begging to be played.

28...♖xg6

Even now White holds all the trump cards, and he thought he had found a killer...

29 ♖xf5??

29...♖xg1+ 30 ♔b2 ♖f1!!

...and a killer it is, only for Black.

31 ♕xf1 ♕xd4+ 32 ♔b1 ♖xf5 33 ♕xf5 ♔g7 And the extra piece proved decisive.

M.Czerniak-E.Eliskases
Mar del Plata 1949

23 ♗xa6!

A great sacrifice.

23...bxa6 24 ♕e2 ♘c6

Returning the piece with 24...♖xc3 25 ♕xe7 ♕xe7 26 ♖xe7 was not exactly optimal for Black, but now he is definitely lost.

25 ♕xa6 ♖ce8 26 ♖eb1 ♕f4 27 ♕d3 ♕e4 28 ♕g3+ ♕e5 29 ♕g4 ♖e6 30 a6 ♖he8

A slim hope; maybe White will miss the mate threat on e1...

31 h3 d4 32 ♕d1

This wins, as would many other moves like 32 a7, 32 ♕f3, etc.

32...♔a8 33 ♕b3 ♕e4 34 cxd4 ♖g6 35 g3 ♖ee6 36 b7+ ♔b8

36 d5 was fine too, and there are other overwhelming moves. It is difficult to choose

what to play, precisely because everything seems to do the job.
37 a7+ ♘xa7

38 ♖xa7? Missing a hidden resource. 38 ♕a3 would have won immediately.
38...♖b6! 39 ♕xb6
39 ♖aa1! still leaves some winning chances, but White was probably in shock.
39...♖xg3+! 40 fxg3 ♕e3+ ½-½
Perpetual check is unavoidable.

Ed.Lasker-D.Janowski
New York 1924

42 f4
42 ♖xe5 is also good.
42...♖g1+ 43 ♔d2 ♖b1 44 ♕h5! Black is dead lost, but sometimes miracles happen...
44...♕g7 45 ♕e8+
45 fxe5 ♕g2+ 46 ♖e2 ♖b2+ 47 ♔c3 was simplest, but the text move harms nothing yet.
45...♔a7 46 ♕g6??

Wrongly rejecting 46 fxe5 or 46 ♕e7+.
46...♗xf4+!
Suddenly the a1-h8 diagonal is opened for the black queen and White is lost.
47 ♖xf4 ♕b2+ 48 ♔e3 ♕xb3+ 49 ♔f2 ♕c2+ 50 ♔g3 ♖g1+ 51 ♔h3 ♖h1+ 52 ♔g3 ♖g1+ 53 ♔h3 ♖xg6 54 fxg6 ♕xg6 55 ♔h4 ♔b7 56 ♔h3 ♕e8 57 ♔h4 ♔c6 58 ♖g4 ♕e2 59 ♔g3 ♕d3+ 60 ♔h4 ♕c2 61 ♘e7+ ♔d7 62 ♘d5 ♕h2# 0-1
"I would probably have taken cyanide that night, had I been a few years younger", commented Edward Lasker later.

A.Matanovic-J.H.Donner
Beverwijk 1965
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 b5 5 ♗b3 ♘a5 6 d4 exd4 7 ♕xd4 d6??
A dreadful blunder, losing immediately. At least, it should have...
8 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 9 ♕d5+ ♗e6
Of course, if 9...♔e8 10 ♕xa8.
10 ♘g5+ ♔e8 11 ♘xe6
"It was mostly shame that prevented me from resigning at this point" – Donner.
11...c6 12 ♕h5+ g6 13 ♕f3 ♕e7 14 ♘xf8 ♘c4
Or 14...♕xf8 15 ♕c3 with a double attack, winning additional material.
15 0-0 ♘f6 16 ♗h6 ♘e5 17 ♕c3 ♘fg4 18 f4
This is winning, as would have been many other moves.
18...b4 19 ♕h3 ♘xh6 20 fxe5 ♖xf8

Now 21 ♖xf8+ or 21 ♘d2, as well as 21 ♖d1 were good choices.
21 ♕xh6?? ♕a7+ 0-1
The winner described the game as "a crime against chess".

Too lazy to set-up the chessboard?
Download our free electronic database (available in both PGN & CBH formats) with all the chess and annotations from this, and every article - only at:
www.chess.co.uk

A.Beliavsky-L.Christiansen
Reggio Emilia 1987

24...c6?! 25 dxc6 bxc6 26 c5 dxc5 27 bxc5 ♘d7 28 ♘d6 ♘df6 29 ♗c4
Black's last moves were hardly the best and White has achieved a considerable advantage.
29...♘xf2?!
A daring attempt to obtain counterplay.
30 ♔xf2 ♖a3 31 ♗xf7+ ♔g7 32 ♕e6
It seems to be game over.
32...♖a2+
Now any king retreat to the first rank would do, as would 33 ♕xa2.
33 ♔g1 ♖8a3!
Ingenious, if still insufficient. If the queen offer is accepted, Black will deliver perpetual check.
34 ♘e8+
White had a large choice, with 34 ♕h3 and 34 ♕xa2 two other good moves.
34...♔h6
And not 34...♘xe8? 35 ♕xg6+.
35 ♘xf6 ♖xg3+ 36 ♔h1 ♕xf7 37 ♖d7
There was nothing whatsoever wrong with 37 ♕xe5 or 37 ♘g4+.
37...♕xf6

38 ♕xf6?
After winning for most of the game, White makes a mistake at the very last moment. He should have preferred 38 ♖h7+!.
38...♖h2+!! ½-½
Black sacrifices both his rooks and salvages an escape via stalemate.

J.Van der Wiel-P.Van der Sterren
Dutch Ch, Hilversum 1986

17 ♘xg5?

A mistake, after which Black obtains a considerable advantage.

17...♘b4!

Similarly good would have been 17...♘d4!.

18 cxb4 And not 18 ♗xd7?? ♘c2#. **♕xb5 19 ♖h4 ♗d7 20 ♕e2 ♘f4 21 ♕f3**

"I was faced with so many splendid possibilities that I simply did not know what to do", Van der Sterren would later admit. In addition, it should be pointed out that the game was played in the last round of the Dutch Championship, where a draw would have been enough for him to win the title.

21...f6 21...♘xd3+ 22 ♔d1 ♕a4+ 23 ♘b3 ♘f4 was much stronger.

22 ♘h7 ♕xd3

And here 22...♘xd3+ or 22...♗d4 would have improved.

23 ♗xf4 ♕xf3 24 ♘xf3 exf4 25 ♖h6? ♗e6 Maintaining his advantage, but missing 25....♗c6!.

26 ♘h4

Now 26...♖ag8 27 ♘xf6! ♖xg2! was correct, but gradually Black's methods of realising his advantage had become more and more complicated. At this point he made two blunders in a row and found himself lost after missing a very decent bag of opportunities.

26...♗f7?? 27 ♘f5+ ♔d8? 28 ♘g5!

The wheel has well and truly turned round.

28...fxg5 29 ♖xh8+ ♗e8 30 ♘g7 ♔d7 31 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 32 ♖xe8 ♔xe8 33 ♔e2

And White won in a further 10 moves.

N.Weinstein-D.Suttles
U.S. Open, Chicago 1973

Black has had a lost position for many moves now, but the wealth of winning possibilities now paradoxically rather hindered White.

28 ♕d3

Or just 28 ♕a7.

28...♔f8 29 ♖d1 ♔e7 30 ♕f3 ♕xe6 31 ♕a8 ♕c6 32 ♕g8

And here there was 32 ♕d8+ ♔e6 33 ♕g8+.

32...g5 33 ♕xh7+ ♔e6 34 ♕g8+ ♔e7 35 ♖d8

Promising too would have been 35 ♕g7+ ♔e6 36 h4 gxh4 37 ♕g4+ ♔e7 38 ♕b4+.

35...♘b7 36 ♖c8

Also effective would have been 36 ♖f8 or 36 ♕f8+ ♔e6 37 ♕e8+.

36...♔d6

37 ♕g7??

37 ♖f8 and 37 ♕g6 were still good enough.

37...♕xc2!

Suddenly the result has become rather unclear.

38 ♕f8+

Not 38 ♕xf6+? ♔d7 and the rook is lost in view of the threatened back-rank mate.

38...♔d5

Objectively White should hold this position, but he became disoriented and lost.

39 ♕g8+ ♔d4 40 g3 ♘d6 41 ♖a8 ♔c3 42 ♕d5 ♔b2 43 ♖xa6? ♘e4 44 ♔g2 ♕xf2+ 45 ♔h3 f5 46 ♕xe5+ ♔b1 0-1

Finally, something really extraordinary.

Dr. Perlis-N.N.

Kurt Richter presented this position, probably from a skittles game. How could anyone with the black pieces, regardless of their level, *not* win such a position?

1 f5 ♕xh2 2 ♔f1 ♘g5 3 h4 ♘h3 4 ♗xh3

4...♕xh3+??

Well, he found it!

5 ♔g1 1-0

If Black could get rid of his b-pawn, he would sacrifice his queen and escape with half a point by stalemate, despite his horrendous blunder. As it is, he is mated in six, starting with 5...b5 6 axb6.

Christmas Quiz Solutions

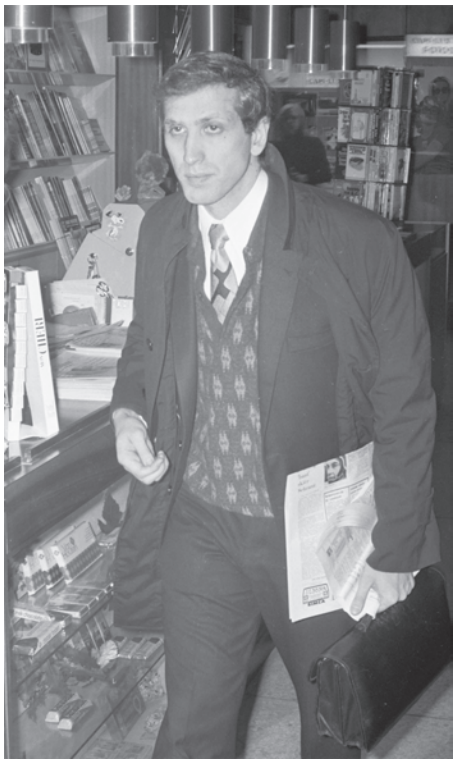
Did you attempt our festive-themed quiz in the January issue? If not, we've supplied the questions again, along with the answers. Quiz compiled by Charles Higgie & Matt Read

1) The composer of the song 'White Christmas' will lead you to this defence. **Berlin**

2) Which opening is an anagram of 'tier'? **Reti**

3) Which opening variation takes its name from two monsters? **Frankenstein–Dracula Variation**

4) In 1961 Bobby Fischer (*pictured below*) claimed that 3....d6 was a refutation of which opening? **King's Gambit**



5) 'The Fried Liver Attack' is perhaps the only opening named after a food. It is a variation of which opening? **The Two Knights' Defence to the Italian Game**

6) Which world champion lends his name to a Defence to the Queen's Gambit?**Lasker**

7) 'The Monkey's Bum' is a variation of which opening? **Modern (Robatsch) Defence**

8) Which country produced 7 world champions, but hasn't got an opening named after it? **USSR**

9) This defence is named after a city which is situated on a river. The settlement on one side of the river gives the first part of the city's name, the settlement on the other side gives you the second part of the city's name. **Budapest**

10) Which nationality lends its name to the most number of chess openings? **Indian**

11) Many openings are named after countries, towns and cities, but can you name a defence named after a group of peoples living across many different countries? **The Slav Defence**

12) In Bobby Fischer's 'Game of the Century' the game transposed into which opening? **Grünfeld Defence**

13) The word 'gambit' comes from a word meaning 'to trip' – in which language? **Italian**

14) Smyslov, Breyer, Chigorin, Steinitz, Bird and Schliemann all have a variation named after them – in which opening? **Ruy Lopez or Spanish**

15) This opening could connect courage with double? **The Dutch Defence**

16) This opening could connect letters to kissing? **The French Defence**

17) Which opening shares its name with an Ultravox hit? **Vienna**

18) Which chess opening is a Hebrew term meaning 'son of my sorrow'? **Benoni**

19) Which attack was famously used as a prepared variation against the then world champion José Raúl Capablanca in 1918? **Marshall Attack in the Spanish/Ruy Lopez**

20) Which opening variation was simultaneously played by Argentine players Panno, Pilnik and Najdorf who were facing the Soviet Grandmasters Geller, Spassky and Keres in a 1955 Interzonal? **The Gothenburg Variation of the Sicilian Defence, Najdorf Variation.**

Anagrams of Players' Names

Famously, 'It's Only Me' is an anagram of Tony Miles and was used for the name of the book containing writings by him and about him brought out after his death.

Can you find the players hidden in these anagrams?

21) On the girls	**Nigel Short**
22) Shy and vain	**Vishy Anand**
23) Resignation trap	**Tigran Petrosian**
24) Banner lets	**Bent Larsen**
25) Uncle grass man	**Magnus Carlsen**
26) Slow Eyes	**Wesley So**
27) Hair I Sing	**Anish Giri**
28) Thonged person	**Stephen Gordon**
29) Alarming pic	**Pia Cramling**
30) Camel Limp No	**Malcolm Pein**

It happened in 2018

31) 2018 was an Olympiad year. Which country cleaned up, winning not only gold medals in the Open and Women's section, but also gold medals for their board ones' performances? **China**

32) 2018 saw a new women's world champion. What's her name? **Ju Wenjun**

33) Alongside the Olympiad in Batumi, FIDE held an election to determine its new

President. Who emerged victorious? **Arkady Dvorkovich**

34) Name the nine-year-old chess prodigy who has been saved from deportation following a protracted immigration battle. **Shreyas Royal**

35) Magnus Carlsen retained his world no.1 spot in 2018, a position he has held on every FIDE rating list since July 2011. Who was the the previous world no.1? **Vishy Anand**

36) This year's British Chess Championship saw some familiar names engraved on the trophies. The Open winner is now a six-time champion and the Women's Champion is now an eight-time winner. Name both. **Michael Adams** *(pictured below)* **and Jovanka Houska**

37) Radoslaw Wojtaszek and Alina Kashlinskaya carried off both the major prizes at the Chess.com Isle of Man tournament. What else links the winners? **They are husband and wife**

38) Javokhir Sindarov became a grandmaster in October at the tender age of 12 years, 10 months and 5 days, which makes him the second youngest ever. Who is the youngest? **Sergey Karjakin at the age of 12 years, 7 months, 0 days. Since setting this question in December, Javokhir has been superseded by Gukesh Dommaraju of India who became a grandmaster at the age of 12 years, 7 months, and 17 days.**

39) Which country hosted the Tata Steel Rapid and Blitz this November, marking the country's first-ever Super-GM tournament? **India**

40) Which other tournament do Tata Steel sponsor and will do so again in 2019? **Wijk aan Zee**

The Positions!

We hope you will forgive us if we begin with a couple from Charles' recent games? (At least that way they are fairly easy!)

41)

White to play and win

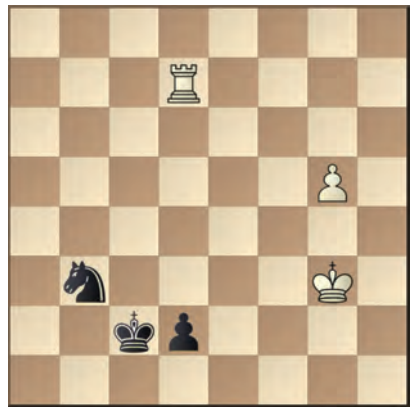
1 ♖xd7 wins – if **1...♕xd7** then **2 ♘f6+** wins the black queen. I was playing white in an Internet game. The loser gave me permission to use the position, but requested anonymity.

42) Can Black safely take the e-pawn?

I was brave enough to play **15...♕xe5!**. It looks like White can win Black's queen with **16 ♗f4!**, but Black has the amazing resource **16...♘fe4**. After **17 ♗xe5 ♘xd2 18 ♗xg7 ♘xf3+ 19 ♘xf3 ♔xg7 20 ♖ae1 e6 21 ♖d1 ♖ad8 22 b4 ♘e4** I was a clear pawn up and managed to win, although there were mistakes from both sides along the way.

43) The third and final position from Charles' games, and this was a very lucky escape for him. He was very pleased with himself for playing ...♘a1-b3 last move rather than the obvious ...d2-d1♕ which loses easily.

At the time he thought ...♘a1-b3 drew, but was interested to find out from an endgame database that White actually had a winning move, that was not played. So, what was the winning move that White missed?



White to play and win

1 ♔f4! is the only winning move for White – check it on an endgame database!

44) The position at the top of the next column is Black to play and win. And, for a bonus point, this position has a link to a song by *The Beatles*. What is the link?

Black to play and win

1...♘b4! and The Beatles link is that they produced a song in 1965 called 'The Night Before'. Source: Yelena Dembo's excellent daily quiz on Facebook.

We haven't got three wise men for you – but we have got three interesting endgame positions:

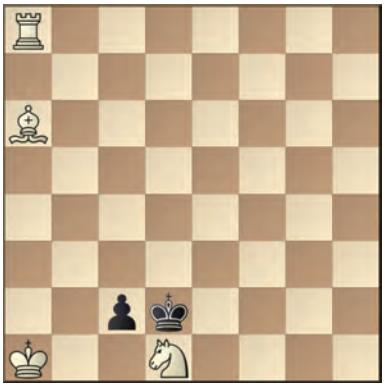
45)

White to play and win

Once you solve it, you may like to ponder why there is only one solution?

1 ♔g5 (threat 2 ♕h8#) **1...♗g8 2 ♕f3 ♗f7 3 ♕h3**. This is why the king couldn't go to g3 on the first move – the queen has to be able to get to h3 from f3. After 3 ♕h3 the double mate threat on c8 and h8 means that White mates on the next move.

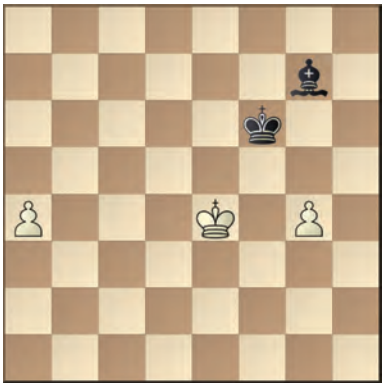
46)



White to play and win

1 ♖d8+ (the only move!) **1...♔e1** (if 1...♔c1 then 2 ♖c8 is the simplest win, although 2 ♗e2 also wins) **2 ♖e8+** (again the only move) and now **2...♔d2** is met by **3 ♘c3! c1♕+ 4 ♘b1+ ♔d1 5 ♖d8+ ♔e1 6 ♖f8** with the threat of 7 ♖f1+, either mating or winning the queen. If you want to see other variations, set it up on a six-piece endgame database.

47)



White to play and win

1 a5 (again the only move) **1...♗f8 2 ♔d5** (keeping the black bishop out of c5 and d6) **2...♗h6** (hoping to play 3...♗e3 to stop the a-pawn) **3 g5+**! and Black is lost – if he takes with the king, then simply 4 a6 wins, while if Black takes with the bishop then after 4 ♔e4 his king is again unfortunately placed and prevents his bishop coming back to stop the a-pawn. We came across these three endgame puzzles on Youtube.

48) Mate or be mated! We always like to give readers their money's worth, so here goes...

White to play and mate in 3
or *Black to play and mate in 4*

The mate in three for White is **1 ♖a8+ ♔xa8 2 ♕f8+ ♖b8 3 ♕a6#** and the mate in four is **1...♖xb2 2 ♔a1 ♖bxc2+ 3 ♔b1 ♖c4+ 4 ♖c2 ♕xc2#**. This is based on the 1986 game Remon-Vilela, but we swapped the colours round as we felt White should have the quicker mate.

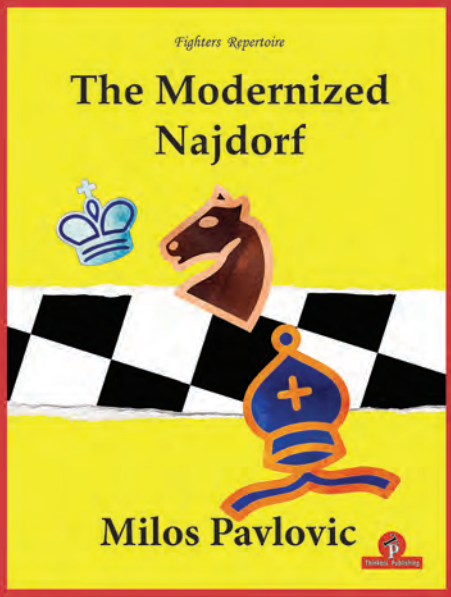
49) Here is an unusual position and one you can't use a computer to 'cheat' on (as far as we know anyway). White has just made his 10th move, resulting in stalemate. How did we get here, admittedly with some assistance from Black?

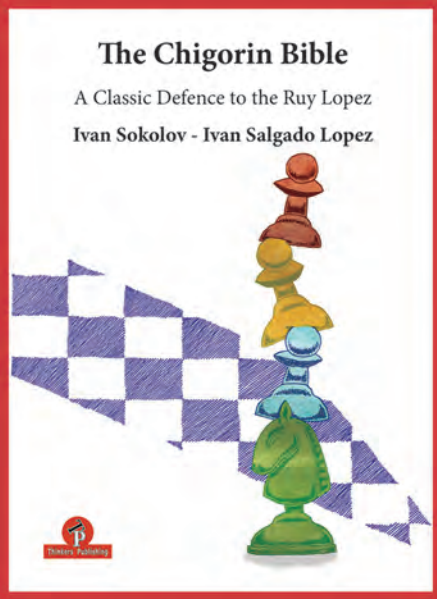
This 10-move stalemate arises after **1 e3 a5 2 ♕h5 ♖a6 3 ♕xa5 h5 4 ♕xc7 ♖ah6 5 h4 f6 6 ♕xd7+ ♔f7 7 ♕xb7 ♕d3 8 ♕xb8 ♕h7 9 ♕xc8 ♔g6 10 ♕e6**.

50) And finally, are any of the white pieces on this chessboard a promoted one? If not, explain why. If so, prove it by constructing a game ending in the position.

There is a promoted piece! Here is how the position could have been reached: **1 ♘f3 a5 2 ♘e5 a4 3 ♘c6 dxc6 4 d4 ♗g4 5 ♗h6 ♗f3 6 exf3 e6 7 ♗c4 ♗d6 8 a3 ♗g3 9 hxg3 ♕f6 10 ♗a2 ♕f4 11 gxf4 gxh6 12 ♕d3 ♘e7 13 ♕b3 ♘f5 14 ♘d2 O-O 15 ♘e4 axb3 16 ♗b1 ♔h8 17 ♖a2 bxa2 18 d5 a1♗ 19 b3 ♗d4 20 d6 ♗a7 21 d7 ♘a6 22 d8♗ ♘c5 23 ♘g3 b6 24 ♘h5 ♗b8 25 ♘g7 ♖e8 26 ♗f6 ♖d8 27 ♗a1**. The promoted piece in this case is the white bishop on a1.

Sources for these last two puzzles, 'Chess Problem Lovers' which is attached to the Gameknot website.





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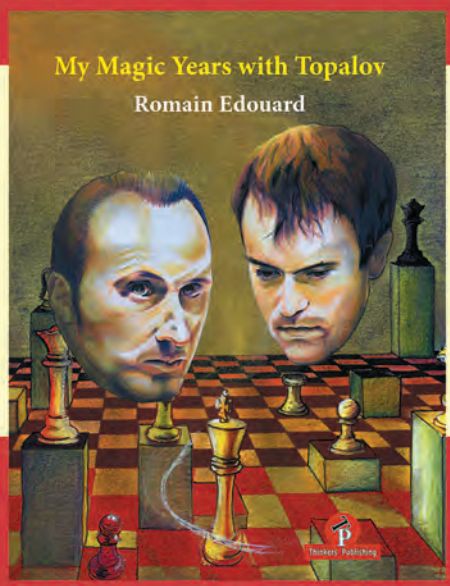

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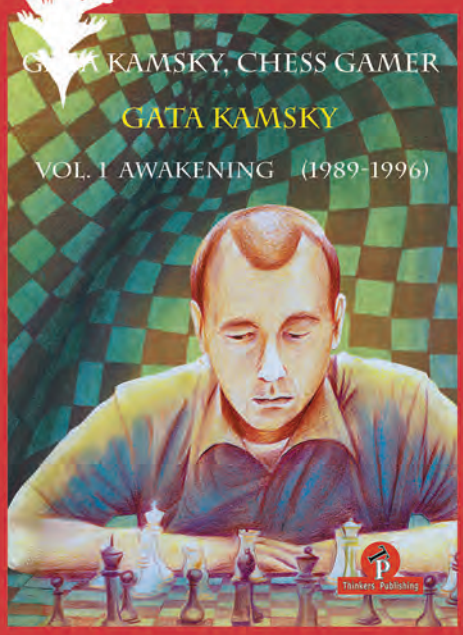
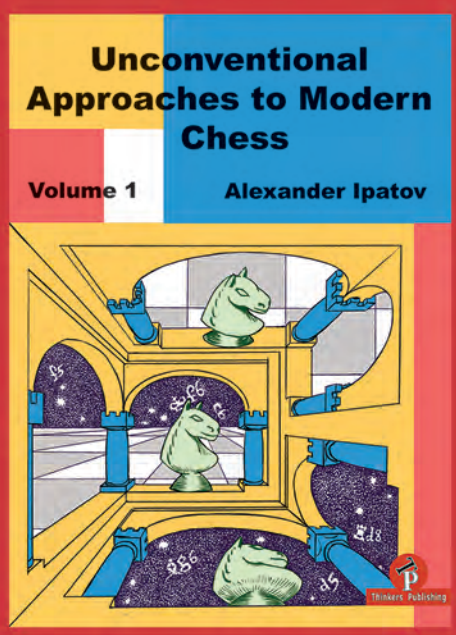
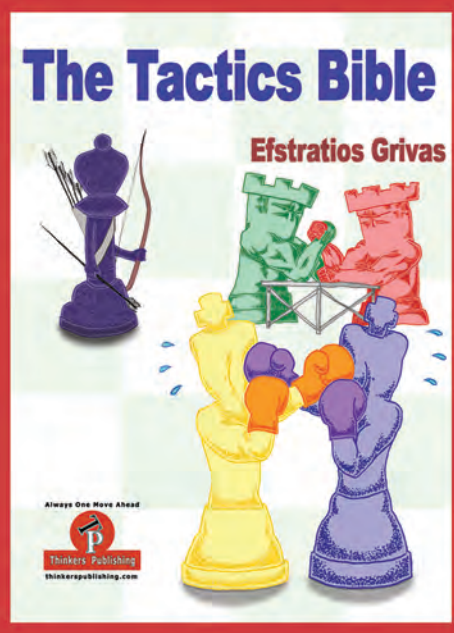






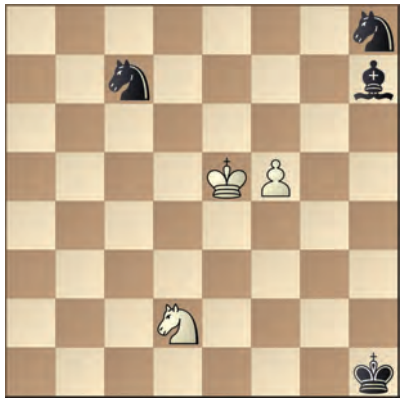
Studies with Stephenson

One of the most prominent of Russian chess composers is Andrey Selivanov, who recently celebrated his fiftieth birthday. A composing tournament was organised in his honour and it was won by his countryman Oleg Pervakov, one of the really great study composers of the current day.

Oleg Pervakov
1st Prize, Selivanov-50 JT, 2017

White to play and draw

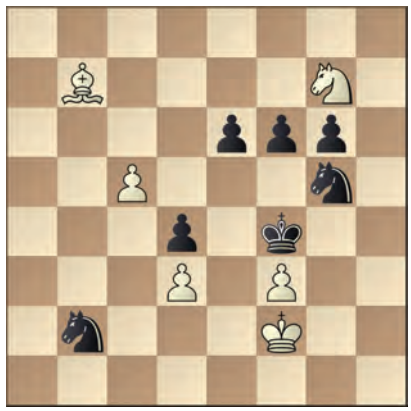
1 ♘f3 h1♕ 2 ♘d2+ ♔g1 3 ♗xh1
After 3 ♘f3+? ♕xf3+ 4 ♗xf3 ♗xf5 5 ♔f4 ♗c2 (and not 5...♗d7? 6 ♗g4) 6 ♗b7 ♘g6+ 7 ♔g5 ♘e7 Black has all the threats covered and can win.
3...♔xh1 4 ♔f4!
Other moves allow the superior black forces to activate and prevail. Possibilities are: 4 ♘e4? ♘d5+ (4...♗xf5? 5 ♘g3+) 5 ♔d4 ♘xc7 6 ♔e5 ♘e8 (avoiding 6...♗g8? 7 ♔f6 ♗a2 8 ♘d6) 7 ♔e6 ♘g7+ 8 ♔f6 ♘xf5 9 ♘g5 ♗g6 10 ♘e6 ♘d6 (if 10...♘h6 11 ♘d8) 11 ♔g7 ♘df7, 4 ♔e4? ♘f7 and 4 ♔d4? ♗xf5, winning for Black in all cases.
4...♘d5+ Both 4...♗g8 5 ♘e4 ♘d5+ 6 ♔e5 ♘xc7 7 ♔f6 and 4...♘f7 5 ♘e4 ♘d5+ 6 ♔g4 ♘xc7 7 ♘f6 are simpler draws. **5 ♔e5!**
And not 5 ♔g5? ♘f7+. **5...♘xc7**



6 ♔f6!
Now we are at the heart of this study. White fights to occupy g7 and win a piece by forking the units in the corner; Black fights to prevent this. Instead, 6 ♔d6? allows the cornered pieces out: 6...♘b5+ 7 ♔e6 ♗g8+ 8 ♔f6 ♗a2 and wins.
6...♘e8+ 7 ♔e7 ♘g7 8 ♔f6 ♘h5+ 9 ♔g5 ♘g3 10 ♔f6 ♘xf5
10...♗xf5 11 ♘f1 is also a draw.
11 ♘f3 ♗g6 12 ♘e5 ♗h7 13 ♘f3 ♔g2 14 ♘g5 ♗g6 15 ♘e6 ♔f3
Or if 15...♘d6 16 ♘f4+.
16 ♘f8
This signals the draw as Black must now lose a piece.

Our study for solving was mentioned in a recent award of the French chess composition magazine *Phénix*. I am sure that the French solvers would have enjoyed tackling it. Will you?

Borislav Ilincic
4th HM., *Phénix*, 2017



White to play and win

To enter email matt@chess.co.uk or send your name and address, with the main variations, to Chess & Bridge Ltd., 44 Baker Street, London, W1U 7RT, postmarked no later than 1st April. There is a £25 voucher for the first correct entry drawn.

The Trends in Chess Openings

The top twenty openings as played by International Masters and Grandmasters in December

1	=	Reti Opening	428 games
2	⇧	1 d4 ♘f6 sidelines	309 games
3	⇩	Caro-Kann Defence	258 games
4	⇩	King's Indian Defence	225 games
5	⇧	1 d4 d5 sidelines	193 games
6	⇧	Sicilian, Najdorf	184 games
7	⇩	Slav Defence	170 games
8	⇧	Sicilian, 2 ♘f3 d6 sidelines	168 games
9	⇩	English, 1...e5	149 games
10	⇧	Giuoco Piano	147 games
11	⇩	Sicilian, 2 ♘f3 sidelines	145 games
12	⇧	English, 1...c5	136 games
13	⇩	Queen's Gambit Declined	135 games
14	⇧	English, 1...♘f6	121 games
15	⇩	Catalan	110 games
16	⇧	Sicilian, Kan	106 games
17	⇧	Queen's Indian Defence	106 games
18	⇩	Nimzo-Indian Defence	104 games
19	⇧	Ruy Lopez, Berlin	95 games
20	⇩	English, 1...e6	91 games

5,818 games played between 1-31 December where both players were rated over 2400 Elo

Source: TWIC. Compiled by *HIARCS 14*.

In association with
HIARCS Chess Explorer - hiarcs.com
and *The Week in Chess* -- theweekinchess.com

A FISHY TALE

An novel attempt to create a rival to AlphaZero, by J. Corfield

To the best of my knowledge there have only ever been two recorded cases of chess being played by non-human life-forms. One is the well-known Joey, the budgerigar, but it is of the other case I wish to tell you.

My tale begins on a wet November evening when I'd just settled down to listen to the radio. I was disturbed by the doorbell ringing. I looked at my watch; 18:58, just two minutes before the broadcast was due to begin. Who could it be on such a miserable night as this? On opening the door I received the first of the many surprises that were to come that memorable evening. It was Leslie; he was one of those old duffers who are to be found at every chess club; they turn up every week, never seem to win a game, but will be back, for sure, the following week.

I'd never actually played him myself, as – how can I put this tactfully? – I've always played board one for our first team and Leslie was in the third team, mainly selected to avoid a default. In club knock-out competitions he was always eliminated in the first round whilst I was seeded straight into the final. Once, on strolling passed his board, I noticed that he was a whole rook down and it was obvious that only a violent kingside assault would give any hope of avoiding a defeat. And what did he play, after ten minutes thought? Why, P-QR3. That move summed up his abilities and, to this day, whenever I come across the move 'a3', I'm reminded of dear old Les. Incidentally, Leslie will be the last person in the country to abandon the English Descriptive notation. He still even writes 'Kt', rather than 'N'.

"Do you mind if I come in?" he rather diffidently asked. "No", I replied, remembering that some months previously he had mentioned a possible visit, but I was also conscious of the opera that I was intending to listen to. At this, he shuffled in, carrying a large cardboard box, which he proceeded to set down carefully on my sitting room table.

"I hope you don't mind my coming round like this," he said, "But I do want the opinion of a top-class player and you're the obvious person to ask."

"Yes, yes. Quite so," I replied. I ought to explain that I've been club president and champion for the last 35 years, and so have acquired something of a local reputation, though I say it myself. My main distinction is that I'm the only one at the club who knows the *en passant* rule in all its ramifications. If ever I find myself in a king and pawn ending, one pawn down, then I spring the *en passant* rule upon my opponent when they are least expecting it. That one can remove one of one's opponent's pawns from the board and add an extra one of one's own, on any square, is a little known rule that I have utilised on several occasions.

I once opened a chess book and it stated that mating with a king and two bishops against a lone king was quite easy, but a king, bishop and knight against a lone king was more tricky. Well, I've never investigated either of these, but it did inspire me to think of a simple way of allocating club players to teams. If they can checkmate with king and one queen against a lone king, they qualify for the first team; if they need two queens, they are placed in our second team; if they require three or more queens, they qualify for the third team. On a personal note, I did once manage to achieve a checkmate with a rook and king against a king. Afterwards I couldn't remember how I had done it and so didn't mention it to anyone else at the club, in case they thought that I was boasting and challenged me to do it again.

"You do know that I've been acting as a chess coach?" he nervously confided. "Yes, of course," I replied. For weeks now at the club, Leslie had been buttonholing everyone about how he was intending to produce a player of grandmaster strength, but I don't think that anyone took him at all seriously.

"Well, I've taught him all I possibly can and I want your opinion of how good he is. I'm hoping that you'll give him a game and tell me what you think." "OK," I replied, trying not to smile, "Bring him along to the club next Friday and I'll give him a thrashing. By the way," I added, "Does he know how to checkmate in under 50 moves with just three queens against a lone king?"

Leslie pondered this for a moment and then said: "I'm not absolutely sure if he can manage that yet. I can't say precisely how much he has learned as he has taught himself for much of the time, as I'll explain later. But," and here Leslie became even more earnest than usual, "I wondered if you could give him a game immediately; this evening, if that's alright?"

His quiet tone of voice made me feel uneasy and instinctively I glanced across at his box on my table. "But what is his name and how can I possibly play him now? I really don't want to go out this evening," I added, thinking of the opera that I was missing. For a moment Leslie remained silent, but he, too, was looking at his cardboard box.

"This is the awkward bit," he began, "I don't quite know how to explain this." By now his voice had dropped to a whisper and he was clearly struggling to express himself. "I might as well tell you directly, since you need to know but the whole point is, you see... Well...," here he rose in discomfort and started pacing around the room. "Well, actually," he continued, "I might as well tell you. You see..."

By this time he had reached the table and was standing by the box. "This is the awkward bit; despite what I told people at our club, the person I've been coaching isn't a person at all. It's a goldfish and his name is Murphy – and here he is." As he exclaimed these last words, he opened the box and gingerly removed a bowl, a goldfish bowl, and inside it was a...goldfish.

"I acquired Murphy in New Orleans and he challenges you to a game! What do you say?" he proclaimed; his diffidence had evaporated.

What could I say? What can one say when one is rendered speechless? I will admit that I was dumbfounded; never before had I been challenged to a game of chess by a goldfish. I just sat there slowly opening and closing my mouth, unable to think of a response.

Meanwhile, Leslie was unwrapping a magnetic chess-set which he placed vertically beside the bowl. In a complete daze I sat down in front of my own chess set. For the benefit of those born in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, in what follows I've translated Leslie's archaic notation.

"Now Murphy will play White and his opening move is **1 e4**." Leslie firstly played this move on the magnetic set and then again on my board and declaimed, "Your move!"

"Hang on a minute. Am I playing you or Murphy?" My initial shock was wearing off.

"Don't worry, I'll explain as we go along. Just make your first move." In a trance I played **1...e5** and Leslie copied this on the magnetic board. Almost immediately he announced that Murphy had played **2 ♘f3** and he proceeded to play that move on both the chess boards. "Now play your reply on your board and watch carefully what happens when I copy it on the magnetic board."

Feeling utterly stupid, but not liking to say anything, I moved **2...d6** and turned my gaze to the goldfish who proceeded to wriggle for a moment or two and then became stationary, with its eyes focused on its magnetic board. "He has played **3 d4**; your move!"

"But how do you know?" I protested at last. "The secret is you have to count how many times he wriggles his tail," Leslie explained. "Play your move and then count how many times Murphy wags his tail."

I played **3...♗g4**, and we both watched Murphy start to wriggle and, as he did so,

Leslie counted out loud: "One, two, three, four; one, two, three, four; one, two, three, four, five; one, two, three, four, five. There we are: 4455, which means he has played **4 dxe5**."

This was getting more and more ridiculous. "Why does 4455 mean dxe5?", I asked helplessly. "Aren't you familiar with the international correspondence chess notation?" Leslie asked.

18	28	38	48	58	68	78	88
17	27	37	47	57	67	77	87
16	26	36	46	56	66	76	86
15	25	35	45	55	65	75	85
14	24	34	44	54	64	74	84
13	23	33	43	53	63	73	83
12	22	32	42	52	62	72	82
11	21	31	41	51	61	71	81

"It is so simple; I tried teaching Murphy the English Descriptive notation, but 'KKt to QB square' was beyond his understanding. I had more success with the algebraic notation, but he took to the correspondence notation like a duck to water. Surely you must have met this notation before? So play your move and then count with me how many times he wriggles his tail when he replies."

I played **4...♗xf3**, when 4, then 1, followed by 6, and finally 3 was wriggled. I could tell that this meant that the piece on square '41' moved to square '63', so **5 ♕xf3** was seen. It then dawned up on me that it was indeed Murphy, not Leslie, whom I was playing and that he was a talented opponent. I could no longer anticipate a quick win and realised that I must settle down for the evening.

"Would you mind if I put on the radio because Rossini's 'Barber of Seville' is being broadcast from Paris and it was my intention to listen to it tonight? I could count on a fine performance as it is being conducted by Luke Brunswick." Leslie had no objection as he doubted if the sound waves would reach Murphy, so the remainder of the game was accompanied by this opera.

5...dxe5 6 ♗c4

By this stage I had almost got used to the peculiar arrangements and play proceeded smoothly. Just occasionally I would count Murphy's wriggles to confirm that all was well, but I had a rash of questions to ask. "Why did you teach him chess in the first place, and how did you teach him the moves? Why not teach him bridge or mathematics or even Chinese?"

"Well," Leslie replied, "it all started when I installed ChessBase on my computer. Until then Murphy had shown no interest in anything that appeared on the screen, but once ChessBase was switched on I could tell he was fascinated; he couldn't take his eyes off the screen. When I do word-processing or anything like that he ignores the computer, but switch on chess and he instantly concentrates. I even tried moving his bowl to different parts of the room, but he always faces the monitor and focuses on the screen if there is chess to be watched."

At this point I played another move:

6...♘f6

Whilst we were waiting for Murphy to reply Leslie continued his explanation. "You've heard of the Polgar sisters?" I nodded agreement. "Of course you have; everyone has. Well, I read the father's account of how he trained his three daughters. From infancy the girls were brought up in a chess environment. Morning, noon and night they were saturated with chess and became amongst the best players in the world. Well, if he could do it, why couldn't I? I meticulously followed his plan, but as I've no longer any daughters, I fixed upon Murphy instead."

Everyone in our town knew of the terrible tragedy that had struck Leslie; it had made the front page of our local paper. "And why is he called Murphy?" I enquired, trying tactfully to change the subject.

"Well, he was the only one who survived." For a moment Leslie was overcome with grief at the memory of that horrible evening when he had been at our chess club, oblivious to the awful fact that his house was burning down. Imagine adjourning a game and coming home to find that his house was destroyed; both Union Jack flags that proudly flew from its roof had fallen and his two clocks, one of which he always kept going, were stopped; his four horses all dead, not to mention a quartet of visiting clerical friends, four pet birds, his almost identical-looking twin brother, his two wives and all 16 children, too. And on top of that, he had a tricky rook ending to analyse before next week. What an evening!

Leslie had lost almost everything, but when the rubble was searched there was something that had survived the fire: his goldfish, miraculously protected from the inferno by the bowl of water. "He clearly had the luck of the Irish so I gave him an Irish name: Murphy."

7 ♕b3?

Until this move Murphy had played quite well and had successfully avoided all my traps. But this move is weak; everyone knows that Fred Reinfeld taught that you shouldn't move your queen a second time until all your back-row pieces have been developed. Leslie was clearly rattled by this blunder and got Murphy to confirm the move, which he did in a rather aggressive manner.

7...♕e7 8 ♘c3 c6 9 ♗g5 b5 10 ♘xb5?

The beginning of the end. This error is even worse than his seventh move. He obviously overlooked that this pawn is protected. I replied quickly, though for a moment I did wonder if it was fair to take advantage of his blunder. Somehow, beating a goldfish at chess seemed like taking candy from a child, but then I remembered that there is no such thing as a friendly game of chess.

10...cxb5

It was at this point that I asked Leslie just how good he thought Murphy could become and how did he compare with the chess-playing budgerigar that had been in the news a few years back. This, it turned out, was not the thing to say. "Don't talk to me about Joey; he was a one-day wonder. He played one good game against somebody, it might have been Kasparov, and was never heard of again. Don't mention Joey to me."

I quickly changed the subject and play continued: **11 ♗xb5+ ♘bd7 12 0-0-0 ♖d8**

"Teaching Murphy to play was easy; I just put a copy of the rules by his bowl and left him on his own for four hours. When I returned he had obviously played against himself a huge number of times, for he had learned a tremendous amount. Now he loves following games on my computer, but I do wonder what he sees when he views a board from inside his bowl. I mean, does the curved glass distort his vision? Do the ranks and files appear as straight lines to him? I ask this because initially he found the moves of the rooks and bishops difficult, but he latched on to the knight's move instantly. And do the squares at the edge of the board look smaller than those in the centre?"

I was relieved of the necessity of attempting an answer by Murphy's next move.

13 ♖xd7?

I was as embarrassed as Leslie by this ghastly error; it cannot be blamed on time pressure; more likely Murphy's tiny, little mind was overloaded. Apologetically, I took the rook.

13...♖xd7 14 ♖d1 ♕e6 15 ♗xd7+?

When down on material, exchanging pieces is not to be recommended, but White's position is passed saving. I couldn't help

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wondering how a goldfish resigns a game of chess; this was not something that I had ever contemplated before that day.

15...♘xd7

16 ♕b8+??

On seeing this further, pathetic howler I giggled and Leslie slumped back in his chair. I don't know whether it was my laughter or the realisation that Murphy was being trounced that upset him but after I reluctantly played...

16...♘xb8

...Leslie, without a word, started to put away the chess pieces. He didn't need to say that the game was over; his demeanour stated it all too clearly. With a sad, parting glance at me, Leslie got up and prepared to leave.

One final curious incident was, that as Leslie placed the towel back over the bowl and put it back inside the box, I could hear that Murphy was thrashing madly with his fin, so much so, that water was being sprayed out of the bowl. I regret to report that this display of poor sportsmanship continued until my two visitors were out of my house.

Upon reflection, if training a goldfish for months only produces a standard of play that wouldn't get into our fourth team, if we had one, it doesn't say much about the coach. Unsurprisingly Leslie kept quiet about this episode, although years later, when I cautiously inquired, he did mention two subsequent developments.

It transpired that old Les had added another goldfish to the bowl, hoping to provide Murphy with a chess opponent, but the newcomer declined all challenges, preferring to study Shakespeare. Consequently, chess had been abandoned by Murphy in favour of studying the law. This venture had an equally unsatisfactory conclusion: the public being unwilling to accept that a goldfish's memory was up to the task, resulting in Murphy's final years being rather troubled.

Subsequently the chess world was rocked by the revelation that the exploits of Joey, the budgerigar, were a deplorable hoax. This means that Murphy is unique among animate chessplayers.

Forthcoming Events

February 1-3 **Frodsham Congress**
www.kisekigo.com/frodsham19.html or call 01928 719787

February 2-3 **Kidlington Congress**
www.kidlingtonchess.org.uk or call 01865 727419

February 7 **Hendon 'First Thursday' Blitz**
www.hendonchessclub.com or call 07855 036537

February 8-10 **Dudley Congress**
www.castlechess.co.uk or call 01707 661160

February 8-10 **Perth Congress**
www.scotchesstour.co.uk

February 9-10 **4NCL, Telford, Daventry & Bolton**
www.4ncl.co.uk or call 01993 708645

February 9 **Golders Green Rapidplay**
goldersgreenchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

February 15-17 **Bristol Winter Congress**
www.bristolcongress.co.uk or call 07817 604014

February 16-17 **Hampstead U2200 Congress**
hampsteadchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

February 16 **Warwick University Rapidplay**
warwickchess.com/index.php/tournament/

February 17 **Richmond Rapidplay**
www.rjcc.org.uk/richard/index.htm

February 22-24 **Bunratty Chess Festival**
bunrattychess.com

February 22-24 **Doncaster Rapidplay**
mannchess.org.uk/doncong.htm or call 07951 151093

February 22-24 **Dyfed Congress, Fishguard**
www.welshchessunion.uk/calendar/ or call 07811 852829

February 22-24 **Warwickshire Champs, Coventry**
congress.warwickshirechess.org or call 07528 611483

February 24 **Leyland Rapidplay**
congress.popmalc.org.uk/congress/38/home or call 01772 865347

And for the Online Connoisseur:

January 22-31 **Gibraltar Masters**
www.gibchess.com; Adams, Aronian, Jones, So, MVL, etc.

Feb 1-3 & March 1-3 **German Bundesliga**
www.schachbundesliga.de; Adams, Howell, McShane, Rapport, etc.

Congress organisers – Don't forget to email editor@chess.co.uk to ensure your event is listed, or if you really want to guarantee a good entry, contact Matt@chess.co.uk to discuss having it advertised.

Hampstead Congress Comes of Age

Golders Green and Hampstead supremo Adam Raoof has been delighted to see juniors dominating his prize list of late

Someone who is a regular visitor to my Hampstead and Golders Green tournaments challenged me to name any young player who had started at the bottom and worked their way through the ranks, encouraged and emboldened by their experiences in these monthly events. It's hard to do that for a rapid event. There are plenty of young players who are now masters who also 'happened' to play a lot at Golders Green – but then they played a lot of tournaments.

Although I have spent the best part of 30 years organising a monthly rapid chess tournament, which used to be called Golders Green Rapid because it was situated in that area, and is now called Golders Green Rapid, even though it has moved nominally into Hampstead, because that's how most people know it, I would be the first person to admit that rapid chess is probably not the place to learn new things.

Try out new ideas, have some fun learning new openings, yes – but rapid chess (and even more so, blitz chess) is not the place to develop your career. For that, you have to play chess at a slower pace, and write the game down, and spend some time reflecting over the board and later, after the game, on what you did wrong and what you did right.

Weekend tournaments, played at what we call a standard time control, are where you can really try to push yourself against stronger opposition, where the clock is not so much a third player in the game. Ideally that tournament should be played using Fischer timings, so that you get a chance to play out positions you might have previously given up as drawn in a guillotine finish.

A Fischer time control enables you, nay obliges you, to continue to write the game down throughout. You may curse, but later on you will thank the arbiter for forcing you to take those precious seconds. You want immediate feedback on how you have done, via a rating system that is updated frequently, and ideally you want to get into a routine when you are playing a tournament: same venue, same time control, same schedule. A FIDE-rated event would be perfect.

Enter the monthly Hampstead FIDE Congress. Originally conceived as a way to raise money for the Age Concern Resource Centre venue for one Hampstead Summer Festival, we recently held the 67th edition of the event. There are three sections: Under-2200, Under-1900 and ECF Under-135. The top section is restricted to Under-2200 not because we don't want elite players, but because this means that FIDE will allow us to rate three games on the Saturday, using the time control of 60 minutes per player per game plus 30 seconds a move.

We have limited space. Nevertheless, the event has grown from a modest 50 players into a regularly fully subscribed event topping out at 100 players of all sizes carefully squeezed into the main hall, side rooms, in the garden (in good weather), and even a board in a large cupboard. We have always attracted younger players, who adapt very easily to the time control, are ambitious in their chess and are looking for regular practice. They also take up less space in the playing hall!

However, recent events have seen, for the first time, juniors winning all three sections – and regular attendees at Hampstead too. This has been a major breakthrough for us, as for the first time we have seen young players like Savin Dias, Federico Rocco, Xavier Cowan, Arnav Srivastava, Coby Graff and Savas Stoica beat off all opposition to take first prize, and others like Alexander Jamieson, Tashika Arora, Emily Maton and Eric Eedle hot on their heels. Maybe in 2018 Hampstead has itself come of age?

See how these young stars handle all phases of the game calmly and maturely:

Notes by Savas Stoica

S.Stoica-C.Davies
Hampstead Under-135 2018
Scandinavian Defence

1 e4 d5 2 exd5 ♕xd5 3 ♘c3 ♕d8 4 d4 ♘f6 5 h3 ♗f5 6 ♘f3 e6 7 ♗e3 c6 8 ♗c4 ♘bd7 9 ♕e2

This line of the Scandinavian is very solid for Black, but not particularly ambitious. White aims for a quick d4-d5, while Black waits for overextension or pressure on the light squares.

9...♘b6 10 ♗b3 ♗e7

The side on which White castles is very important. Castling queenside would lead to a pawn storm on both sides with an attacking game, but going kingside leads to a slow, positional battle.

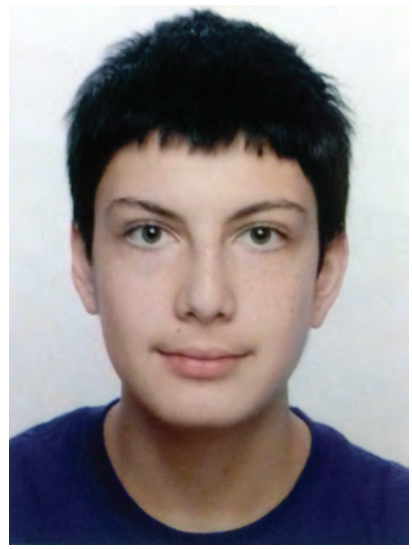
11 0-0 0-0 12 ♖ad1 ♘bd5 13 ♘e5!? ♘xe3?!

Obtaining the bishop-pair, but opening the f-file towards his king. 13...♘xc3 14 bxc3 ♘e4 15 ♕e1 ♗d6 16 ♘c4 ♗c7 17 g4 ♗g6 18 ♘e5 ♗xe5 19 dxe5 ♕h4 20 ♔g2, with a complex fight ahead, would have been better.

14 fxe3 ♘e4?

Allowing the following tactic:

15 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 16 ♖xf7!



Savas Stoica is a dangerous attacker and enjoyed landing a powerful blow on f7.

Smashing open his kingside and activating my light-squared bishop.

16...♗d5!?

16...♖xf7 17 ♗xe6 ♗g6 18 ♘xg6 hxg6 19 ♕c4 ♕f8 20 ♖f1 ♗f6 21 e4 wins a pawn at the end for White, but Black has drawing chances.

17 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 18 ♖f1 ♗f6 19 ♗xd5 exd5 20 ♘d7 ♕e7 21 ♘xf6+ gxf6 22 ♕g4+ ♔h8 23 ♕f4 ♔g7 24 ♖f3 ♖e8 25 ♔f2 ♖f8 26 h4

Starting to lock down Black's position, as he has no active counterplay.

26...♔h8 27 h5 ♕e4?

Removing all chances. Keeping the queens on would prevent an immediate breakthrough: 27...♕b4 28 ♕h6 ♕d2+ 29 ♔g3 ♕e1+ 30 ♔h2 ♖f7 when the check on h4 prevents 31 ♖xf6.

28 ♕xe4 dxe4 29 ♖f4 f5 30 g4 ♔g7 31 gxf5?

Inaccurate. Better was 31 ♔g3 fxg4 32 ♖xf8 ♔xf8 33 ♔xg4, with a win.

31...♔h6 32 ♔g3 ♔g5?

Black had to try 32...♔xh5 33 ♖xe4 ♖xf5 34 ♖e7 ♖b5 35 ♖xh7+ ♔g6 36 ♖c7, even if White would be favourite with his mobile centre pawns.

33 ♖xe4 ♖xf5 34 ♖e7 ♔h6 35 ♖xb7 ♖xh5 36 ♖xa7 1-0

* * * * * *

I get to see all the games at Hampstead and the one thing all winners have in common is a little bit of luck in coming though some pretty tough (let's face it, in some case lost) games. You have to be ready to take your chances when they come and that means never giving up, playing actively and giving your opponent problems even when they are on top.

Notes by Xavier Cowan

I have played my opponent before in another competition and I just about drew, but made a mistake in the opening that I was fortunate not to pay for. Playing him again with the black pieces, I knew had to play the opening correctly to lead on from where I left off. Luckily, I had been refining my response to the 6 ♗e2 variation of the Sicilian Najdorf.

P.Lim-X.Cowan
Hampstead U1900 2018
Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2 e5

This was my refinement, and now the game takes on a different route to our previous game.

7 ♘b3 ♗e6 8 ♗e3 ♗e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 f4 ♕c7 11 f5 ♗c4 12 ♗xc4 ♕xc4 13 ♕f3 ♖d8 14 ♖ad1 b5 15 ♗b6 ♖d7 16 a3 ♗d8 17 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 18 g4 ♕c7 19 g5 ♘fd7 20 ♖d2 ♘b6 21 ♖df2 ♘c6 22 f6 g6 23 ♕h3 h5 24 gxh6

It's strange that White's advanced pawn is so useless here.

24...♔h7 25 ♘d2 ♘d4 26 ♘f3 ♘xf3+ 27 ♖xf3 ♖h8 28 ♕g2 ♕d8 29 h4 ♔g8

Better was 29...♕f8.

30 ♖g3 ♖xh6 31 h5 ♔h7 32 hxg6+ fxg6 33 f7

After this move, White's advantage is completely gone.

33...♕e7 34 ♕f2 ♕h4 35 ♕g2 ♔g7 36 ♖g4 ♕e7

I was really low on time at this point, down to about five minutes.

37 ♕f2 ♖ah8

Of course, I was fine with a draw.

38 ♕g2 ♖f8 39 ♕d2 ♘c4 40 ♕c1 ♖xf7 41 ♘d5 ♖xf1+ 42 ♕xf1 ♕f7

I am actually winning now and so my spirits soared, but dwindled when I saw I had only one minute on the clock and counting.

A little bird just told me

A round-up of what the top players and chess personalities have been saying on Twitter

Gawain Jones - @GMGawain
British Knockout Champion at the 4th time trying. Thanks to everyone for their support and @DeepMindAI @myolympia for hosting. Combining classical, rapid and blitz chess was interesting and fun but exhausting! A few days at home now before heading to St Petersburg for #wrbc2018

Malcolm Pein - @TelegraphChess
So I get to my hotel in Tenerife, order a drink, sit down and the guy next to me is looking at his phone. Yup it's Magnus's game on Sesse and he's listening to NRK #WRBC2018 @TarjeiJS #Norwegianseverywhere

Anish Giri - @anishgiri
Very satisfied with my visit to St.Petersburg and a surprisingly decent result. My congratulations to Magnus Carlsen and Daniil Dubov for their triple crown!

ChessCrazy - @DwayneTiller
Trash talking gives us chess fans something fun to see. You and Magnus should be like @jimmykimmel and #MattDamon. Either way, great to see your great sportsmanship and great play during #wrbc2018.

Demis Hassabis - @demishassabis
"Programs usually reflect priorities and prejudices of programmers, but because AlphaZero programs itself, I would say that its style reflects the truth." Awesome words from the brilliant @Kasparov63.

Lewisham Chess Club - @LewishamChess
Local player Conor Murphy (plays for @CharltonChess Club) came 1st = at the venerable #Hastings event with 4 GMs & an IM! Great result for somebody who isn't even an IM, and started event as 15th seed.

Tarjei J. Svensen - @TarjeiJS
Here is my updated list of the longest drawing streaks that I could find among some top players (very unofficial):
Carlsen: 21, Giri: 20, Ding: 20, Caruana: 19, Andersson: 19, Karjakin: 17, Svidler: 15, Radjabov: 15, Leko: 14, Nakamura: 14, So: 13, Aronian: 13, Kramnik: 10.
#TataSteelChess

43 ♕e2 ♘xb2 44 ♖g3 ♘c4 45 ♖f3 ♕d7 46 ♘f6 ♕a7+ 47 ♔g2 ♕e7

Played with only seconds to spare, but I was alive due to the amazing 30-second increment

48 ♕f2 g5?

This throws my advantage away

49 ♘d5 ♕d7 50 ♖f5 ♖g6 51 ♕g3 ♕e6 52 ♕f2 ♘xa3?

A big mistake.

53 ♕a7+ ♔h6 54 ♕xa6 ♘xc2 55 ♕a8 ♖g8

56 ♕c6??

As we analysed after the game, 56 ♕a7 holds the position. During the game, my opponent was initially annoyed because he thought he missed 56 ♕a2, but then there is 56...♘e3+, and bam!

56...♘d4! 57 ♕c1 ♘xf5 58 ♕h1+ ♘h4+ 59 ♔g3 ♖f8 0-1

I was pretty pleased with the result as I played out the majority of this game with only 30 seconds a move.

* * * * * *

I've been running chess events for quite a while, but the 66th weekend congress of 20-21 October 2018 – in which those two games were played and young players

Young Xavier Cowan is a big fan of the Sicilian Najdorf which has served him well.

dominated the prize list – will stick in my memory for quite some time.

My calendar of North London Chess rapid play and standard tournaments is well established as I have run some of them for many years. I am now working on ways to add additional value to established events for both players and spectators, particularly through the use of social media. These include online highlights of events including the prize giving, which there is never enough time for on the day. I have started to experiment with live streaming, filming and post-game analysis. I am also planning a series of short videos which will cover questions I am frequently asked, such as how to make sense of the grading system.

The use of new technologies by players of all ages means we are moving into a new phase of learning; online lessons, coaching and webinars. Chess events national and local are now streamed live on Facebook and YouTube. I even have my own Chess TV Channel – www.twitch.tv/adam raoof.

I am currently looking for sponsorship so that I can buy five smart boards, which will allow play on the top boards in all my tournaments to be followed live online. I have previously only used smart boards at the Kings Place Rapidplay tournament, but want to increase their use, as I believe that although often not titled there are many strong players who attend the Golders Green and Hampstead tournaments, who produce interesting games that are well worth recording.

Now in its sixth year the Kings Place Rapidplay is the largest and strongest rapid tournament in the UK. Last July, in order to add value particularly for the parents and partners who patiently attend this event, I arranged a lunch time concert by the concert pianist and composer Petr Limonov. The recital also raised money for children's charity Gift of Life. Feedback following the event was very positive and I am hoping to deliver a similar programme this year.

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Readers' Letters

A White Christmas

In his informative article on Alain White's problems in the January CHESS, John Henderson presents the second problem on page 31, the 'pyramid problem' as a mate in two, then proceeds to give a mate in three. The position rang a bell, and I discovered that I had used it in the Chorlton Chess Club Christmas Quiz in 2013. Surely there is indeed a bona fide mate in two: 1 d6 is the key move, after which White has a choice of six mates, depending on Black's reply. Or have I missed something?

Best wishes to all at CHESS - keep up the good work!

Graham Phythian, Manchester

John Henderson replies: Not at all! There could well be numerous mates in two in that problem. I picked those two studies because they stood out when I first saw them as a kid in some early Hugh Courtney Christmas Quizzes.

World Championship Matches

The current format clearly is not the best when one player is able to lock down the classical games, forcing draws and effectively turning the contest into a rapidplay/blitz contest, something which is already catered for in other world championships held separately.

Have the authorities considered doing away with tie-breaks and simply either greatly reducing or eliminating rest days? Given many want chess to be accepted as a sport then surely this suggestion would increase the significance of stamina and fitness in the contest. I accept that 12 games may then be too few, though.

Tony Sharp, Hastings

Overseas News

AUSTRALIA – Adelaide played host to the Lidums Australian Young Masters (8-14 December), which is designed to give Australia's finest talents a challenge from some established visitors from overseas. A GM norm all-play-all went to Russian Vasily Papin who racked up 7/9; Australian IMs Bobby Cheng and Junta Ikeda shared third place a point and a half back. In the IM event, Norwegian IM Benjamin Notkevich also amassed 7/9, with English FM Brandon Clarke, who is currently living in Sydney, claiming second spot on tie-break, a point behind.

GREECE – The FIDE office remains in Athens for now and confirmed that the women's world championship will now mirror the open world championship; in other words, the champion won't have to defend their title in a 64-player knock-out. Ju Wenjun did just that, of course, in Khanty-Mansiysk back in November, but the Chinese no.2 will now play a match in the second half of this year against the winner of a Candidates tournament.

The Candidates is scheduled to begin in Kazan on May 29th. Hou Yifan is one of eight players who has qualified for it. It will be interesting to see if her studies at Oxford permit her to take up her berth. The rest of the field is likely to comprise Nana Dzagnidze, Valentina Gunina, Alexandra Kosteniuk, Katerina Lagno, Anna Muzychuk, Mariya Muzychuk and Tan Zhongyi.

After the World Rapid and Blitz Championships (see below), Magnus Carlsen leads the rapid rating list on 2869. Hikaru Nakamura is back on 2845, with the other players over 2800, Lenier Dominguez Perez, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. Meanwhile the blitz list sees not one, but two players over 2900! Carlsen is once again top on 2954, with Vachier-Lagrave back on 2933, and Hikaru Nakamura as low as a mere 2894. Notably too Mickey Adams is world no.9 at 2796.

The main FIDE rating list is also headed by, of course, Magnus Carlsen. The Norwegian superstar might not have been at his best against Caruana, but remains the dominant force of the modern era. Caruana now finds himself seven points behind on 2828, with Mamedyarov and Ding Liren also comfortably over 2800 before there is something of a gap back to fifth-placed Anish Giri on 2783. Meanwhile it's all rather tight at the top of the British list, just 16 points separating Michael Adams at 2701 from fourth-placed David Howell.

HOLLAND – The annual Groningen Chess Festival once again took place from the 22nd to the 30th of December, with play on all days bar the 25th. Michal Krasenkow and Sergei Tiviakov were two of the favourites, but Tiviakov took a quick draw in the final round and was passed by both 21-year-old Estonian Grandmaster Ottomar Ladva and the 16-year-old Dutch IM Liam Vrolijk. The pair finished on 7/9, with Ladva taking the title on tie-break.

IRELAND – Dublin once again hosted New Year GM and IM norm all-play-alls (2-6 January), under the direction of Ivan Baburin, son of GM Alexander. The GM event was won by the German Grandmaster Igor Glek with 6/9, GM Daniel Fernandez and nowadays Aussie IM Gary Lane sharing second half a point behind. Meanwhile Swedish FM Michael de Verdier tied for first with Scottish IM Andrew Greet on 6½/9 in the IM tournament.

MACEDONIA – Skopje hosted the European Rapid and Blitz Championships (6-9 December). The stars largely stayed away, although a few players did use the event to warm up for the subsequent World Rapid and Blitz. The winner of the Blitz was rising Russian star and speed expert Vladislav Artemiev, the top seed rather decimating the field as he racked up a whopping 18½/22. Ivan Cheparinov took silver, a point and a half back, with David Navara the bronze medalist.

Navara was fourth seed in the subsequent Rapid Championship as Artemiev again headed up the field. However, they both finished just outside the places as there was something of a ratings turn-up, with four players tying for first on 10½/13: Valery Popov, Andrey Esipenko (both RUS), Vahap Sanal (TUR), and Luca Moroni (ITA). Esipenko is only 16 and the other two who missed out on tie-break only a couple of years older, but it was 44-year-old Popov who took the title.

RUSSIA – Moscow once again hosted a wintry clash between a team of 'Kings' and one of 'Princes' (17-22 December). The Kings were represented by not one but three former world championship challengers, Nigel Short, Peter Leko and Boris Gelfand, who were joined by Evgeny Najer. Meanwhile 20-year-old David Paravyan, 18-year-old Alexey Sarana and 16-year-olds Andrey Esipenko and Semyon Lomasov presented a talented line-up for the Princes.

A Scheveningen format began with a classical match, which went to the Princes, 17-15. Alexey Sarana led the way for the winners with an impressive 3/4, with Nigel Short also in form as he top-scored for the Kings with '+1'. Short had a somewhat tougher time in the subsequent double-round rapid match, which the Kings took 17-15, despite Peter Leko racking up an impressive '+4', before the Princes had the last laugh as the tie-break was the classical result.

St. Petersburg hosted at short notice the World Rapid and Blitz Championships (Open and Women's) over the western festive period (26-30 December). Gawain Jones and Sue Maroroa were Britain's only representatives in what were four very strong tournaments. Magnus Carlsen couldn't have made a worse start in the Rapid, losing on time in the opening round, despite the 10-second increment per move, while trying to win a tricky two rooks versus queen ending against the Ukrainian Grandmaster Adam Tukhaev. Even worse was to occur in the very next round as the champ faced 16-year-old Uzbek IM Shamsiddin Vokhidov.

M.Carlsen-S.Vokhidov
World Rapid Ch., St. Petersburg 2018
King's Pawn Game

1 e4 e5 2 ♕h5

Oh dear. Even for Carlsen, this feels a little too provocative, although to be fair it works out well.

2...♘c6 3 ♗c4 g6 4 ♕f3 ♕e7

As many a junior knows, Black should prioritise development with 4...♘f6.

5 ♘e2 ♘f6 6 d3 ♗g7 7 ♘bc3 h6?!

7...♘d4 8 ♘xd4 exd4 9 ♘d5 ♘xd5 10 ♗xd5 c6 11 ♗b3 d5 12 0-0 would have been about equal.

8 ♘d5 ♘xd5 9 exd5 ♘a5 10 d6! cxd6 11 ♗d5

A pawn is a small price to pay for jamming up Black's development so.

11...♘c6 12 ♗d2 ♕f6 13 ♕e4 0-0 14 0-0 ♘e7 15 ♘c3 ♕f5 16 ♕b4 ♘xd5 17 ♘xd5 ♔h7 18 ♘c7 ♖b8 19 ♕xd6 b6

Carlsen has completely outplayed his young adversary, but now misses 20 ♘e8!, which would have won material in view of

20...♖b7 21 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 22 ♗xh6+!.

20 f3? ♗b7 21 ♖ae1 ♖fc8 22 ♗c3??

Suddenly White has nothing better than retreat with 22 ♘b5, since there is a certain nasty threat...

22...♗f8

...and there went the queen and the game.

23 ♘b5 ♗xd6 24 ♘xd6 ♕e6 25 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 26 ♖xe5 ♕d6 27 ♖fe1 ♗d5 28 a4 ♗e6 29 a5 bxa5 30 ♔f1 ♖c5 31 ♖xc5 ♕xc5 32 ♖a1 d5 33 ♖xa5 ♕c7 34 ♖a4 ♕xh2 35 ♖xa7 ♕h1+ 36 ♔f2 d4 0-1

True to form, Carlsen rallied, finishing the day on 3/5 while having to admit he "had not played this bad – ever." The leaders at the end of the first day on 4½/5 were Dmitry Andreikin, Ian Nepomniachtchi and the rapidly improving 15-year-old Iranian wunderkind Alireza Firouzja. Carlsen still wasn't at his best on day two, but did manage to close the gap to the leaders to just half a point, Firouzja fading slightly as five Russian and two Chinese GMs shared the lead on 7½/10.

Day three saw a notable landmark for Daniil Dubov, the 22-year-old Russian scooping the $60,000 first prize after finishing undefeated on 11/15. No less notably five of Dubov's victories came as black and only two as white. Perhaps that wasn't such a surprise once we had learnt that Dubov was part of Carlsen's team over in the Gulf as he battled Caruana in London. Carlsen himself landed up in a tie for second, half a point adrift, but had to settle for fifth place on tie-break. The silver and bronze medals went to Shakhriyar Mamedyarov and Hikaru Nakamura respectively, while Firouzja rallied impressively to have the highest performance – a certain 2848 – of all those on '+5'.

Alongside the Open event, the Women's Rapid Championship took place. It only had 12 rounds, but no matter what the format or number of rounds, there's simply no stopping Ju Wenjun these days. The women's world champion at classical chess retained her world rapid title with a dominant display, racking up a dominant 10/12 to edge out Iranian Sarasadat Khademalshariet and Aleksandra Goryachkina by a point.

Gawain Jones finished on '+2' in the World Rapid, but then lost his opening three games in the subsequent Blitz Championship. However, blitz is a Jones forte and he rallied most impressively, fighting back to reach 10½/15 after defeating Dmitry Jakovenko. Unfortunately Jones was then defeated by one of the stars of the show, Jan-Krzysztof Duda, the 20-year-old Pole going on to amass a huge 16½/21. That was some two points more than third-place Hikaru Nakamura could muster, but also half a point less than a clearly determined Magnus Carlsen.

M.Bosiocic-M.Carlsen
World Blitz Ch., St Petersburg 2018
Sicilian Rossolimo

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 d3 ♗g7 6 h3 ♘f6 7 ♘c3 ♘d7

Magnus Carlsen's decision to play chess over the festive period got off to the worst possible start in the World Rapid, but he was simply imperious in the subsequent Blitz Championship.

8 ♗e3 e5 9 ♕d2

We now get to see some more of Carlsen's world championship preparation. Of course, 9 0-0 b6 10 ♘h2 ♘f8 11 f4 exf4 12 ♖xf4 ♗e6 13 ♖f2 h6 14 ♕d2 g5! had led to White being outplayed in Caruana-Carlsen, 1st matchgame, London 2018 – see December's Editorial.

9...h6 10 0-0-0 b6 11 h4 ♘f8!

Beginning a thematic manoeuvre.

12 h5 g5 13 ♘e2 ♘e6

A superb square for the steed. White leads in development, but badly lacks an effective pawn break, while the black knight is bound for d4 or f4. Now 14 ♕e1 followed by ♘d2 and then possibly playing for g2-g3 and f2-f4 was likely necessary.

14 ♘g3 ♘f4 15 ♘e1 ♗e6 16 ♔b1 ♕d7 17 ♘f1?! 0-0-0!

There's no need to retreat the knight.

18 g3 f5

White has been totally outplayed and now 19 gxf4 exf4 20 ♗xf4 gxf4 21 ♕xf4 fxe4 would leave Black's bishops dominant.

19 f3 fxe4! 20 dxe4?

20 fxe4 was the final try, since White surely wouldn't have survived 20 gxf4 exf4 21 ♗g1 e3.

20...♕f7 21 ♕c1

21 ♘d3 ♘xd3 22 cxd3 ♗xa2+ 23 ♔a1 ♗b3 would be quite hopeless, but now the white queen is trapped.

21...♘e2 0-1

The Norwegian superstar finished on a huge '+13' and so ended the year as world champion in two disciplines and, no less importantly, as world no.1 in three. Whilst Carlsen was impressive, Ju Wenjun was struggling, eventually finishing on 11/17. One of her defeats was to the player she had overcome in a dramatic final in Khanty-Mansiysk (see the January *CHESS*), Kateryna Lagno, who finished undefeated with '+10'.

SPAIN – A strong Open took place in Sitges, a seaside resort near Barcelona (14-23 December). The event was most notable not for offering a sunny winter break to many northern Europeans, but for the chance it gave the young Indian IM D.Gukesh to make his third GM norm of 2018. As it transpired, the task proved just beyond the immensely talented 12 year old, meaning that Sergey Karjakin's record for being the youngest-ever grandmaster at 12 years and seven months remains intact.

In the end Gukesh ended up on 6½/10, while thanks to a final round victory over Romain Edouard, Spanish GM Alvar Alonso Rosell claimed sole first with '+6'. Dmitry Andreikin, Vasily Ivanchuk – who began by losing to another talented young Indian, Sreeshwan Maralakshikari – and Krishnan Sasikiran were three of those who landed up in a seven-way tie for second. Meanwhile Millfield School teenager, 2059-rated Max French, gained a whooping 113 rating points for his 50% and 2290 performance, which included draws with two IMs.

SWEDEN – Another traditional event over the festive period is the Rilton Cup in Stockholm. Top seed, the Israeli GM Tamir Nabaty, defeated Awonder Liang with the black pieces in the final round as he scored a huge 8/9. That equated to a 2885 rating performance, leaving Nabaty clearly Israel's no.1. English IMs David Eggleston and Lorin D'Costa performed roughly to par as they finished back on '+1', while Tiger Hillarp Persson, Russia's Sergey Volkov and the Norwegian GM Frode Urkedal shared second place on 7/9. The popular Swedish Grandmaster won perhaps the game of the tournament.

Tiger Hillarp Persson had to settle for a share of second, but was all smiles at the Rilton Cup after winning a game which should warm the heart of all devotees of the Sicilian Defence.

M.Lagarde-T.Hillarp Persson
Rilton Cup, Stockholm 2019
Sicilian Kan

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6 5 ♗d3 ♗c5 6 ♘b3 ♗e7

It might not be a Tiger Modern, but that doesn't mean that Tiger himself isn't in a provocative mood, tempting White into an early if critical queen excursion.

7 ♕g4 g6 8 ♘c3 d6 9 ♕e2 ♘d7 10 0-0 ♕c7 11 ♔h1 h5!?

Not the first move which springs to mind perhaps, but Tiger had played this brave advance before and just watch where the pawn lands up. **12 a4 b6 13 f4 ♘gf6 14 ♗d2 ♗b7 15 ♖ae1 h4**

16 ♔g1

Fleeing from the onrushing h-pawn. 16 h3? ♘h5 would not be wise and 16 ♘d4 h3 17 g3 ♘c5 18 ♔g1 d5! had left Black beginning to take over in Reijneveld-Hillarp Persson, Guernsey 2008.

16...h3 17 g3 ♔f8 18 ♘d4 ♕c5 19 ♗e3 ♕h5 20 ♘f3!?

A brave choice. Many would have traded queens up against such a creative and dangerous player as Hillarp Persson.

20...♘g4 21 ♗d2 ♘c5 22 ♘g5 ♔g7 23 ♘d1

White is struggling for a great plan; Black now begins to take over in the centre.

23...f6 24 ♗c3 e5! 25 ♘f3?

25 ♗c4! would have been consistent with White's previous moves and after 25...fxg5 26 fxe5 all three results would have been possible. Incidentally, here 26...♔h6 might well be Black's best move, leading to a remarkable line-up of pieces along the h-file.

25...♘xa4 26 ♗b4 ♘c5 27 ♘c3 ♖he8

Steady does it, but there was already a tactical solution: 27...exf4 28 gxf4 ♘e3! when the knight is immune due to the potential mate on g2.

28 f5? d5!

The ideal Sicilian counter-strike. The 2616-rated Frenchman has been completely outplayed.

29 ♗a3

Wisely retreating to a protected square, but now White's centre crumbles in thematic overextended fashion.

29...dxe4 30 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 31 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 32 ♕xe4 gxf5

32...♗xa3 33 bxa3 gxf5 would have been even simpler, and if 34 ♕b7+ ♕f7 35 ♕xb6 ♖eb8 36 ♕d6 ♖b2.

33 ♕b7 ♕f7 34 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 35 ♕xb6?

White's king won't survive after this, but even 35 ♕xe7+ ♖xe7 36 ♘h4 ♖d7 37 ♘xf5+ ♔g6 38 ♖e4 ♔g5! 39 ♘h4 ♖g8 would have been quite grim for him.

35...♖ab8 36 ♕xa6 ♕c5+ 37 ♔h1 ♖xb2 38 ♖d1 ♖xc2 39 ♖d7+ ♖e7 40 ♕b7 ♖xd7 41 ♕xd7+ ♔h6 42 ♕d8 ♕c8 43 ♕d6 ♕a8! 0-1

Fine geometry. The pawn on h3 continues to radiate power as White lacks a good way of defending h2 in view of 44 ♔g1 ♖g2+ 45 ♔h1 ♘f2+ 46 ♖xf2 ♕a1+! (and not 46...♖xf2? 47 ♕xf6+).

USA – News that has been looking likely for some time was finally confirmed just before Christmas: the Cuban Grandmaster Lenier Dominguez Perez, who was one of Fabiano Caruana's seconds during the recent world championship match, has switched allegiance to the United States. With Dominguez presumably replacing Ray Robson in their national side, do expect another very close battle for gold between the U.S. and China at the 2020 Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad.

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Three-Way Go

There's no real surprise which three teams have won their first four 4NCL matches

Only three teams won their first four matches during the opening 4NCL weekends of the 2018/19 season in Daventry: champions Guildford, perennial challengers Cheddleton and Manx Liberty, who until the 2015/16 season were SG Trier of the German Bundesliga.

Guildford are in the slightly easier Pool A and began by rather marmalising West is Best, Barbican and Oxford, winning all three matches by at least 7-1. In round 4 they were, however, made to work by Wood Green, who averaged a hardly shabby 2445 to the champions' 2607.

In the end there were just two decisive games after Gawain Jones somehow salvaged a rook ending two pawns down against Daniel Fernandez. One was on top board where new signing Michael Adams's bishop-pair proved too much for Jon Speelman to cope with, while Jean-Pierre le Roux rather crushed Adam Taylor. Le Roux now has 4/4, the only player on such a score this season, although his team-mate Nick Pert and also both Cheddleton's Jonathan Hawkins and Manx's Mircea-Emilian Parligras have racked up 3½/4.

A typical view of Keith Arkell, playing an ending, but he can also spot the tactics when required.

R.McKay-V.Plat
Alba vs Guildford
Philidor Defence

1 d4 d6 2 e4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 e5 4 ♘f3 ♘bd7 5 ♖g1 c6 6 g4 g6 7 ♗e3 ♗g7 8 g5 ♘h5 9 ♕d2 0-0 10 0-0-0 b5!?

The battle lines are clear, but now White might have advanced on the 'wrong' side with 11 a3!?, and if 11...a5? 12 d5! b4? 13 dxc6 bxc3 14 ♕xd6 or 11...♕a5 12 ♔b1 b4 13 ♘a2. **11 dxe5 b4 12 ♘b1?!** Leaving his king without a square. 12 ♘e2 ♕a5 13 ♕xd6! ♕xa2 14 ♕xb4 would have been critical. **12...♕a5 13 a3 ♘xe5 14 axb4? ♕a1 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 c3 a5!**

The a-pawn will wreak havoc. **17 f4 ♗g7 18 b5 a4 19 ♗d4 ♗e6 20 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 21 b6?** 21 c4 cxb5 22 ♖g3! was the last try. **21...♖fb8 22 ♕xd6 a3! 0-1**

If 23 bxa3 ♗a2 24 ♕b4 ♗xb1 25 ♕xb1 ♕xc3+ 26 ♕c2 ♕e3+ and neither is White helped by 23 ♕b4 ♖a4!.

While Pool A has largely run according to seeding, in Pool B Celtic Tigers can be delighted with their 4½-3½ victories over Blackthorne Russia and 3Cs. Already Cheddleton and Manx Liberty are some four points clear on 8/8, both having overcome a small challenge in the shape of Guildford II. It was for Guildford II that Dutch IM Robert Ris enjoyed a memorable opening weekend, comfortably drawing with David Howell as White ahead of giving a model demonstration of the dynamic potential in an IQP position.

S.Gordon-R.Ris
3Cs vs Guildford II

White is under pressure and now 24 ♗d3 was necessary. **24 ♗f3? ♘xg3! 25 hxg3 ♕xg3+ 26 ♔h1 ♖xc1 27 ♕xc1 ♗xf4!** Crunch. All of a sudden White's defences are completely obliterated.

28 ♖e2 ♗g2+! Very neat. Ris has everything worked out. **29 ♖xg2 ♕h3+ 30 ♔g1 ♗xe3+ 31 ♕xe3 ♖e6 0-1**

In the second weekend, the best individual result must have been Blackthorne's Syringa Camp (née Turvey), who outplayed Cheddleton's Laura Stoeri, despite being outrated by some 450 points, while the tactic of the weekend belonged to Stoeri's team-mate Keith Arkell.

K.Arkell-M.Foisor
Cheddleton vs Grantham Sharks

13 ♘xd5!

A common enough tactic in Exchange QGD and here it works due to the position of the black king: 13...cxd5 14 ♕a4+! ♔d8 (or 14...♘d7 15 ♘xd7 ♕xd7? 16 ♗b5) 15 ♕a5+ ♔c8 (if 15...♔e8 16 ♗b5+ or 15...♕c7 16 ♕xd5+ ♘d7 17 ♖ac1) 16 ♖ac1+ ♔b8 17 ♘c6+! bxc6 18 ♖xc6 and Black is quite unable to save her king. Instead, **13...♕d6 14 ♘xg4 ♗xg4 15 ♘c3** left Arkell a pawn to the good which he went on to smoothly convert.

Home News

BRIDGEND – The South Wales Winter Congress (4-6 January) saw a three-way tie for first in the Open.
Open: 1-3 Gregorz Toczek (Cardiff), David Sands (Barking), Conor Gay (Holmes Chapel) 4/5
Major: 1-2 Duncan Macarthur (Keynsham), Dai James (Pontypridd) 4½, 3-9 Stephen Williams (Cwmbran), Tom Bennett (Penarth), Scott Hammett (Haverfordwest), Les Philpin, Andrew Smith (both Swansea), David Parsons (Swindon), Mark Cooke (Barry) 3.

HASTINGS – Danny Gormally reported earlier in these pages on the Masters, the top section of the Tradewise Hastings International Chess Congress (28 December - 6 January). That is only one of the tournaments which make up this large and impressive event, another being the closing weekender which was won by David Howell no less.
Christmas 'A': 1-2 Chaski Patrick (Uckfield), Paul Batchelor (Brighton) 4/5, 3-7 Aditya Verma, Paul Jackson (both Coulsdon), Helge Hjort (Hendon), Chris Howell, Oliver Howell (both Redhill) 3½.
Christmas 'B': 1 Batuhan Kaya (Hastings) 4½, 2-3 Carl Gartside (Clay Cross), Edward Gray (Brighton) 4.
Christmas 'C': 1 Mason Woodhams 4½, 2 Marc Bryant (both Hastings) 4, 3 Lee Bullock (Hackney) 3½.
New Year Morning 'A': 1-3 Jonathan Rubeck (Hendon), Richard Jennings (Aberdeen), Nigel Dennis (Maidenhead) 4.
New Year Morning 'B': 1-2 Chris Snook-Lumb (Wells), Mason Woodhams 4, 3-4 Jeremy Hudson, Andrew Watson (all Hastings) 3½.
New Year Afternoon 'A': 1-2 David Cutmore (Albany), Richard Jennings (Aberdeen) 4, 3 Jonathan Rubeck (Hendon) 3½.
New Year Afternoon 'B': 1 Chris Lake (Brighton) 4½, 2-3 Brendan O'Gorman (Couldson), Chris Hann (Hastings) 4.
New Year Afternoon 'C': 1 Peter Wood (Hastings) 5, 2-5 Colin Denham (Cardigan), Lee Bullock (Hackney), Mark Heffer (Bishops Stortford), James McKenna (Crystal Palace) 3½.
Weekend Open: 1 David Howell (Battersea) 5, 2-3 Madara Orlovska (Lewisham), Aditya Verma (Coulsdon) 4.
Weekend Intermediate: 1-2 Rajeiv Ratnesan (Surbiton), Adrian Waldock (East Grinstead) 4½, 3 Bernard Chan (Leeds) 4.
Weekend Minor: 1-2 Lee Bullock (Hackney), Barry Miles (South Norwood) 4½, 3-4 Adrian Riley (Cowley), Carlton Bradbury (London) 4.

HULL – The Royal Hull Hotel hosted a successful rapidplay for 70 players on 6th January.
Open: 1 Mike Surtees (Great Lever) 4½/5, 2-3 John Cooper (Hull), Miles Edwards-Wright (Sheffield) 4.
Major: 1-2 Stephen Crow, Giles Dunn 4, 3 Bryan Hesler (all Hull) 4.
Minor: 1 Richard Atkinson 5, 2-3 Steve Thrower (both Hull), Steven Brooks (Doncaster) 4.

LONDON – The year began with sad news for the English chess community from St George's Hospital, Tooting, where popular 67-year-old FM Steve Berry passed away following complications arising from various causes.

A proud Yorkshireman, Berry graduated in history from the University of Hull before moving to Sutton Coldfield to work on this very magazine for BH Wood, often producing the *How Good is Your Chess?* column in the seventies. He would then emigrate to Germany to work in IT. There he encountered one of the all-time greats in a simul and would hold his own in a complex positional struggle.

V.Korchnoi-S.Berry
Darmstadt (simul) 1980
Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 f3 d5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 dxc5 ♕a5 9 e4 ♘c7 10 ♕d4 f6 11 ♕b4 ♘c6 12 ♕xa5 ♘xa5 13 ♖b1 e5 14 ♗d2 ♘e6?!

14...♗e6 followed by ...0-0-0 or ...♗c4 would have left Black with full play for his positional pawn sacrifice, which is nowadays one of the main lines.
15 ♖b5 ♘c6 16 ♗e3 ♔e7 17 ♗c4 ♘c7 18 ♖b1 ♖d8 19 ♘e2?!

Allowing the black knight to return to the rim with some effect. 19 f4! ♘a5 20 ♗e2 would have left White pressing.
19...♘a5 20 ♗a2 ♗d7?!

As Berry himself later indicated, 20...♖b8 21 ♔f2 ♗e6 22 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 23 ♖b4 ♖dc8 was correct.
21 ♔f2 ♖ac8 22 c4 ♘a6 23 ♗d2 ♘c6 24 ♖xb7 ♘xc5 25 ♖bb1 ♗e6

Even here Black retains a decent degree of positional compensation.
26 ♗e3 ♘a5 27 ♘c3 ♖d3 28 ♖hc1 ♘xc4 29 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 30 ♗xc5+?

Effectively acquiescing to a draw. There was a tactical solution available and 30 ♘b5! ♖dd8! 31 ♘xa7 ♘d3+ 32 ♔g3 ♘xc1 33 ♘xc8+ ♖xc8 34 ♖xc1 ♗e6 35 ♗c5+ would have left White with some chances in the resulting pawn-up endgame.
30...♖xc5 31 ♖b7+ ♖d7 ½-½

Steve Berry was known for his down-to-earth nature, frankness and dry sense of humour. His good friend Andrew Stone recalls once attending a Middlesex-Yorkshire cricket match at Lord's. "We wandered past the Nursery Ground and he stopped to see a Yorkshire batsman in the nets. The ball came down and the batsman took a good swing at the ball and missed. 'Well left Sir!' boomed Steve. The batsman turned round and looked at Steve totally bemused."

Like Korchnoi himself, Berry's strength hardly seemed to decline with age. He was still graded 221 and Surrey Champion at the point of his untimely death, while just last year he played for the England team as they finished joint fourth in the World Over-65 Team Championship. Indeed, Berry was a captain's dream, playing a great many

Nearest the camera, John Cooper takes on team-mate Dave Stephenson at the Hull Rapidplay.

matches over the years for Kings Head, Mitcham and especially in recent years, Wimbledon and Surrey.

Wimbledon CC colleague Paul Barasi recalls that Steve "liked to chat and relate to everyone. He was brave and relentless in attack. What impressed me was his intuitive understanding of positions. He'd say something like: positions like this are always a win for White – then he'd find how to win it, rather than analysing it first and then deciding who stands better. This may have helped him be such a strong player of resumed adjourned games and a good adjudicator."

Elsewhere in the capital, the latest Golders Green Rapidplay took place on January 5th.

Open: 1-2 V. Haribalu (India), Federico Rocco (Hendon) 5/6, 3 John Pigott (Kings Head) 4½.

Major: 1-2 Yaoyao Zhu (3Cs), Raghu Kamath (Richmond) 5, 3-4 Michael Saunders (London), Anum Sheikh (Ilford) 4½.

Minor: 1 Salvatore Pepe (Hendon) 5½, 2 Mohsen Abedian (west London) 5, 3-6 Luke King (London), Niall Clarke (Elstree), Paul Chantrell (south-east London), Dave Bluestone (London) 4.

Amateur: 1 Ashir Valjee (Metropolitan) 6, 2 Mark Johnson (Colchester) 4½, 3-5 Faye Ainscow (Kings Head), Timothy Demetris (Hendon), Nigel White (Wanstead) 4.

Improver: 1-2 Milo Mallaby (Ealing), Gul Kapur (Enfield) 5.

Earlier the London Junior Championships took place at the University of Westminster's Harrow Campus over the weekend of 15th-16th December and also the 28th-30th.

FIDE-rated Open:1 Federico Rocco (Hendon; London Under-21 and Under-18 Champion) 5/6, 2-4 Aaravamudhan Balaji (Coulsdon), James Golding (Guilford), John Merriman (Petts Wood) 4½.

Under-16: 1 David Jacob Yoon (Enfield) 5½, 2-3 Shahjahon Saidmurodov (Newham), Alex Barlov (Richmond) 4½.

Under-14: 1 Malanta Eryl (Fleet) 5½, 2-6 Arjun Kolani (Brighton), Robert Akeya-Price (Couldsdon), Saahil Bansal (Orpington), Han-Sen Choong (Hampstead), Xavier Cowan (Richmond) 4½.

Under-12: 1 Edison Xu (Newport) 8/9, 2 Kennan Kesterson (Pimlico) 7, 3 Nadhmi Auchi (Barnet) 6½.

Under-10: 1-3 Denis Dupuis (Battersea), Hou Ning Zhu (Maidenhead), Jude Shearsby (Coventry) 6/7.

Under-8: 1 Billy Fellowes (Warwick) 6½, 2-6 Sohum Kumar, Aayush Dewangan (both Maidenhead), Thisumi Jayawarna (Manchester), Patrick Damodaran (Kent), Kameron Grose (Wetherby) 6.

Of course, we mainly associate the period just before Christmas with chess at Olympia, which once again provided the main venue for the London Chess Classic (9-17 December). While the top players were absent from Olympia until the final weekend, each weekday hundreds of children received tuition from Chess in Schools & Communities ahead of the Open beginning at 4.30pm.

Federico Rocco (left) takes on James Golding en route to becoming London U-21 Champion.

Once again, the Open was a very strong, truly international event, with Nick Pert impressing en route to collecting £4,500.

FIDE Open: 1-2 Jules Moussard (France), Nick Pert (Sandhurst) 7½/9, 3-7 Sebastian Bogner (Switzerland), Daniil Yuffa (Russia), Andrei Istratescu (Romania), Tiger Hillarp Persson (Sweden), Ameet Ghasi (Richmond) 7.

Weekday Under-2050: 1-3 Jonathan Underwood (Seaton), Joel Bird (Muswell Hill), Robert Jacobs (Tunbridge Wells) 4½/5.

Under-1750: 1 Tibo Rushbrooke (Westminster School) 5, 2-3 Oliver Finnegan (Loughton), Sune du Toit (South Africa) 4½.

Weekend Open: 1-2 Koby Kalavannan (Surbiton), Ryszard Maciol (Cambridge) 4½/5, 3-5 James Holland (Surbiton), Michael Healey (Richmond), William Taylor (Drunken Knights) 4.

Under-2050: 1 Harry Li (Alwoodley) 5, 2-6 Ivan Myall (Chelmsford), Eldar Alizada (Cumnor), Brendan Ruane (Hastings), Jacob Watson (Petts Wood), Oliver Stubbs (Downend) 4.

Under-1825: 1 Finlay Bowcott-Terry (Halesowen) 5, 2 Oliver Finnegan (Loughton) 4½, 3-8 Matthew Hortin (Old Whitgiftians) Bernard Chan (Leeds), Lukasz Piecha (Winchester), Charles Musselman (USA), Rajeiv Ratnesan (Surbiton), Tim Valentine (Battersea) 4.

Under-1600: 1-2 Shir Satil (Israel), Samuel Ward-Riggs (London) 5, 3 Hengrui Cao (China) 4½.

TELFORD – Ameet Ghasi scooped the £1,000 first prize at the Shropshire Congress (4-6 January), where Mark Hebden and Alan Merry finished outside the prizes.

Open: 1 Ameet Ghasi (Richmond) 4½/5, 2 Tomasz Sygnowski (Sutton Coldfield) 4, 3-4 David Berczes (Hungary), Ryzard Maciol (Cambridge) 3½.

Major: 1 Graham Ashcroft (Preston) 4½, 2 Finlay Bowcott-Terry 4, 3-10 Dustin Bowcott (both Halesowen), Matthew Clark (Shrewsbury), Robert Dean (Pudsey), Ian Emery (Birmingham), Sam Gibbs (Lancaster), Ed Goodwin (Coventry), David Gostelow (Telford), Anita Somton (Nottingham) 3½.

Intermediate: 1 Gary White (Priorslee) 5, 2-3 Graham Shepherd (Church Stretton), Dimitar Kirachen (Oswestry) 4/5

Minor: 1 Jeff Wilson (Oldham) 4½ 2 Khalid Khan (Bradford) 4, 3-5 Ansh Agrawal (Harborne), Silas Bowcott-Terry (Halesowen), Ben Newnham (Tattenhall) 3½.

T.Sygnowski-A.Merry
Telford 2019

36 ♕xg5+!

The less spectacular 36 ♖xe3 ♕xe3 37 ♕xf6 also works.

36...♘g6

36...fxg5 37 ♘h6+ ♔h8 38 ♗e5# is a lovely finish.

37 ♘h6+ 1-0

Solutions

to Find the Winning Moves (pages 26-28)

1) P.Sowray-A.Balaji
1 ♕c8+! 1-0 It's mate with 1...♗xc8 2 ♖xc8+ ♔h7 3 ♖h8#.

2) Van Kemenade-Gormally
1...♖xg3+! 0-1 2 fxg3 ♗c5+ is a deadly fork.

3) Miller-Williams
1...♕xd3! 0-1 2 ♕xd3 ♘f2+ 3 ♔g1 ♘xd3 leaves Black a piece to the good.

4) Han-Willow
1...♖xh2+! (1...♗xf4 2 ♕xg4+ ♔b8 3 ♕xf4+ would fight on) **2 ♔xh2 ♕h4+ 3 ♔g1 ♗d4+! 4 ♖f2 g3 5 ♘b6+ ♔b8 0-1**

5) Bates-Kulon
1...♖g3+! 0-1 It's mate with 2 hxg3 ♕xg3#.

6) Burke-Van Kemenade
Black won the queen and the game with 1...♗d1+, but somewhat more clinical would have been **1...♗xh3+!**, and if **2 ♔xh3 ♕h5+ 3 ♔g3 f4#**.

7) NN-Whitehead
It's a classic case of Anastasia's mate: **1...♕xc7! 2 ♕xc7 ♖xa2+! 3 ♔xa2 ♖a8+ 4 ♕a7 ♖xa7# 0-1**

8) Butt-Fryer
1...♘xe5! (1...♗xe5 2 ♘e2 would fight on) **2 dxe5** (or 2 ♕f4 ♘c4+ 3 ♔d3 ♖xd2+) **2...♕xe5+ 3 ♘e4** (3 ♔d3 ♕d4+ 4 ♔c2 ♕xd2+ will mate on b2) **3...♕d4+ 0-1** In view of 4 ♔f4 ♗e5#.

9) Jaufarally-Tozer
1...♗xg2+! (1...♗xd4 2 ♖xc6 ♘d5 3 ♕d2 ♕g3 should also win) **2 ♔xg2 ♕g3+ 3 ♔f1 ♕xd3+ 4 ♔xf2 ♘g4+ 5 ♔g2** (or 5 ♔e1 ♖f1#) **5...♕f3+ 0-1**

10) Kueppers-Thatte
1...♕h3+! 2 ♔g1 (or 2 ♔xh3 ♘xf2+ 3 ♔g2 ♘xd3) **2...♘xf2! 3 ♕f5** (3 ♔xf2? fails to 3...♕xh2+ 4 ♔f1 ♕xb2) **3...♘g4** bags a pawn.

11) Wall-Gormally
1 ♘xc6! ♖xe2 (or 1...bxc6? 2 ♕xe8+) **2 ♘xb4 1-0** 2...♖e8 3 ♘bxd5 is just two clear extra pawns.

12) Martinez-Hosdurga
1 ♗xe6! 1-0 1...fxe6 2 ♖xe6+ is totally crushing, in view of 2...dxe6 3 d7+ and 2...♔f7 3 ♕f4+! ♔xe6 4 ♖e1+ ♔d5 5 ♕e4+ ♔xd6 6 ♖d1+. 1 ♖xe6+! fxe6 2 ♗xe6 also does the trick.

13) Lagno-Ju Wenjun
1...♖xg3+! 2 hxg3 (or 2 ♔f2 ♖f3+ 3 ♔e1 ♖xf1+ 4 ♔xf1 ♖g1+) **2...♖xg3+ 3 ♔f2 ♖g2+ 0-1** In view of 4 ♔e1 ♕g3+.

14) Grigoriants-Carlsen
1...♕e3+! 2 ♕g3+ (or 2 ♔g4 ♕e4+ 3 ♔h5 ♕h7+) **2...♔h1!** (stalemate will save Black) **3 ♕xe3 ½-½** If 3 b8♕ ♕e6+ followed by 4 Kh4 ♕g4+! or 4 ♕g4 ♕e3+ 5 ♕bg3 ♕h6+.

15) Buksa-Garcia Martin
Most moves are plenty good enough to win, just not blunders of the b7-rook and the **1...♖xb5??** of the game, which permitted White an unexpected stalemate defence: **2 ♖g6+! ♔xg6 3 ♖f6+! ♔g7 4 ♖f7+ ♔h6 5 ♖f6+ ♔g5 6 ♖f5+ ♔xf5 ½-½**

16) Harrington-Evans
1...f5! (the only way for Black to retrieve the pawn he is down) **2 exf6 ♖xc2 3 ♕xc2 ♕xf4+ 4 ♖g3 ♖xf6** left Black with every chance of holding the draw.

17) Thomas-Donnelly
1...♕f2! 0-1 1...♘f6 would also have been strong, but after 1...♕f2 White is quite simply devoid of a good move, as shown by Mike Donnelly: 2 ♕d1 ♗xb2, 2 ♘g1 b3 3 ♗b1 ♗xb2, 2 ♗a4 ♘c5 3 ♗c6 ♘d3 and 2 ♖a4 ♘c5 3 ♖xb4 ♘d3 are all quite hopeless for him.

18) Arkell-Stephan
1 ♘xf7! ♗xf4 (1...♔xf7 2 ♘xe6 ♔e7 avoids any discovered checks, but leaves Black totally bound up and helpless after 3 e5) **2 ♘xd8 ♗xc1?** (allowing mate, but 2...♖xd8 3 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 4 gxf4 ♕xf4 5 ♖e3 would also be rather crushing) **3 ♕xe6+ 1-0**

19) Moore-Nettleton
1 ♗f8! ♕xc4 (or 1...♔xf8 2 ♕h6+ ♔g8 3 ♕g7#) **2 ♕h6 ♕d4+ 3 ♖f2 1-0**

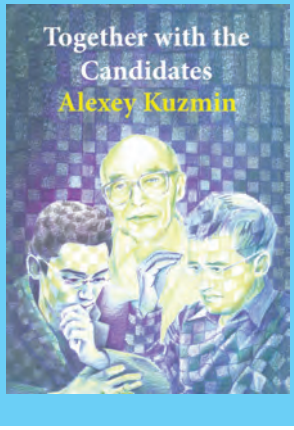
20) D'Costa-Cornette
1...♗xf2+! 0-1 2 ♔h1 (2 ♔xf2 ♘g4+ is deadly in view of 3 ♔g1 ♕b6+ 4 ♔h1 ♘f2+ and 3 ♔e2 ♖e8+) 2...♗xe1 3 ♕xe1 ♕b6 leaves Black two pawns to the good.

21) Wu-Arkell
1 ♗g4! (even more crushing than 1 ♗b5 ♖c8! 2 ♕d5 ♕e7 3 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 4 ♖f6 with heavy pressure) **1...♘e6** (and not, of course, 1...♗xg4? 2 ♕f7#) **2 ♘b5 ♕b8 3 ♘xd6+! ♔d8** (or 3...♕xd6 4 ♕xa8+) **4 ♕d5 ♔c7 5 ♗xe6 ♕b6 6 ♖f7 ♖ad8 7 ♗xd7 1-0**

22) Andersen-Babula
1 c6! bxc6 (1...♗xc6? would allow a standard mate: 2 ♖xc6+ bxc6 3 ♗xa6#) **2 ♗xa6+ ♔d7 3 ♗b7** (or just 3 a5) **3...e5 4 ♗xc6+! ♔c7 5 ♗xe8 ♔xb6 6 ♗e3+ ♔c7 7 ♗b5** left White dominating and he proceeded smoothly to victory: **7...f4 8 ♗f2 ♖f8 9 a5 ♗a8 10 ♖c1+ ♔b8 11 a6 ♗d5 12 ♗c5 1-0**

23) Savitskiy-Bocharov
Faced with ruin on the kingside, Black either resigned or overstepped the time limit, but after **1...♖xb3! 2 ♖xg6+ ♔h8** White lacks a kill and must repeat moves with **3 ♖h6+** (and not 3 ♖xb3?? ♘d2+ or 3 ♕h1+? ♕h7 4 ♖h6? ♘d2+!) **3...♔g8 4 ♖g6+ ♔h8**, as pointed out by Michael Roiz in his fine Open Sicilians column for ChessPublishing.

24) Duda-So
In the game White managed after further adventures to draw with 1 h3?, but **1 ♖xg7! ♔xg7 2 ♖d3** would have been totally crushing, in view of **2...♔h7** (or 2...♖g8 3 ♖g3+ ♔f8 4 ♕xh6+) **3 ♖g3**: for example, **3...♖g8** (to deal with the threat of ♘g5+) **4 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 5 ♘f6**.



Together with the Candidates
by GM Alexey Kuzmin

This book is far more than a history of all the Candidates tournaments and matches, spanning from Budapest 1950 to Berlin 2018. It is also a book of tests and solutions, featuring hand selected game fragments from the various Candidates events. The tests vary widely in their degree of complexity, allowing readers of all abilities to find a test corresponding to their own chess level.

Paperback, 280 pages, Thinkers Publishing

RRP £ 27.95 / **Subscribers £25.15 (plus free UK shipping)**

This Month's New Releases

Vladimir Kramnik:
The Inside Story of a Chess Genius
Carsten Hensel, 256 pages
Quality Chess
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

It is unusual for a new book to appear on an active player whose best days seem to be officially behind him. Kramnik's tenure as champion of the world came to an end more than a decade ago. A near miss at the 2013 Candidates event and a mid-table finish in 2018 suggest he may have missed his chance to return to the top of the chess world.

However, despite falling from the summit, Kramnik is still one of the world's top players and his road to the top coincided with pivotal moments in the history of chess. Indeed, the (in)famous 2006 title clash with Topalov is described as: "The most dramatic of all time. Aside from the 1972 match between Boris Spassky and Bobby Fischer, no World Championship had ever attracted such powerful interest from the media." Students of Korchnoi's chess career may disagree, but there is no doubt a match temporarily derailed by a toilet represents a high watermark in chess absurdity.

Hensel is well-placed to write a book on Kramnik, as he was his manager for several years – a period of time which coincided with the Russian's acquisition of the ultimate title. This book presents Hensel's experiences from inside the world of Kramnik during his period at the top, coming to a halt after the loss to Anand in 2008. The work is quaintly split into 64 parts; one for each square of the chess board. Kramnik's thoughts are incorporated too, usually at the end of each major section. These do not amount to game annotations, but rather provide an insight into his thoughts in a more general fashion.

The world championship plays a central part in Kramnik's story. Not many would have predicted he would be able to end the reign of Garry Kasparov, which proved to be an important step in the eventual reunification of the title. The process was, however, far from plain sailing and it required a particularly difficult match against Topalov in 2006 (creating a personal rift that time has not healed).

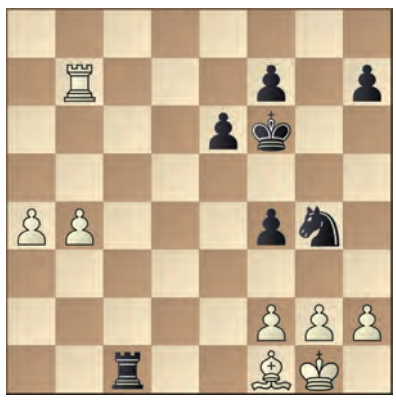
Hensel compares the Kasparov match with the Foreman-Ali 'Rumble in the Jungle' of 1974. "Outsider Ali let himself be pummelled against the ropes by Foreman, as was Kramnik's tactic with Kasparov. Vladimir's ropes were the Berlin Wall and he knew, just like *the greatest whoever lived* once did, precisely what he was doing." The course of the games doesn't fulfil the promise of the comparison. Kasparov's games with White were a severe disappointment and more often than not prematurely drawn. His penultimate White was a dreadful 14-move draw. There were clearly other issues in play in addition to any 'rope-a-dope' strategy by the challenger, but, frustratingly, they have yet to be revealed.

There are, however, numerous revelations from inside Kramnik's own camp. When covering the unsuccessful 2008 title match against Anand, Hensel shines a light on unsatisfactory preparation. Kramnik had asked his team to analyse an important line of the Meran System, but: "When he asked them about it, at midday the next day before the game, the grandmaster responsible had forgotten about this analysis. Kramnik reacted indignantly, and after that the communication between him and his seconds was compromised."

It got worse. "When I fetched Vladimir for the fifth game, he walked straight passed the workroom of his people. They were standing in the open doorway, but he ignored them. I had never seen Kramnik like this. His people obviously wanted to say something to him, but he simply took no notice of them."

This unfortunate state of affairs left Kramnik ill-prepared for the inevitable Meran and the game was Anand's best of the match, with a famous finish to boot.

V.Kramnik-V.Anand
World Ch. (Game 5), Bonn 2008



34...♘e3! 35 fxe3 fxe3 0-1

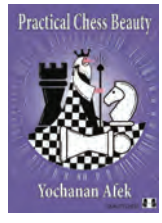
Failing to retain the unified title must have hit Kramnik hard, but he remains full of praise for his conqueror. "The event set benchmarks and proved that even today the game of chess has lost none of its popularity. Under those circumstances it was of course regrettable to lose the match. That made me sad at first. But I did my best and found Viswanathan Anand a worthy successor who more than any other player at that time deserved the victory and the recognition."

The epilogue lists all of the world championship matches to date (only the result of the 2018 Carlsen-Caruana contest is missing, as the book just predates the match), and follows up with the unannotated games of all Kramnik's own title bouts – 69 games in total, with the most recent being already 11 years ago. Another part of the epilogue provides pen portraits of the previous champions, at least those following the classical line, ending with Carlsen as the 16th champion. This is a curious little section, offering nothing new apart from some basic quotes from Kramnik which don't do more than scratch the surface. If such a section needed to be included at all, it would have worked better if Kramnik himself had written a short essay on his fellow champions.

The book is attractive, with a good selection of photographs (some in colour). It is a little smaller than the standard Quality Chess books and is available only in hardback.

I am not so sure the bulk of the epilogue adds very much – the space could have been put to better use with some newly annotated games – but within the bulk of the work there is certainly plenty of interest, offering a new perspective on the quiet champion.

Sean Marsh



Practical Chess Beauty
Yochanan Afek, 464 pages
Quality Chess
RRP £26.50 **SUBSCRIBERS £23.85**

Mention chess studies and practical chess players tend to tune out because they feel the time could be better spent on other aspects of chess. This is a shame, because trying just the occasional study would be

beneficial to a student's powers of analysis and apart from approaching the genre from the mere practical point of view, it could also provide entertainment and instil a genuine sense of wonder.

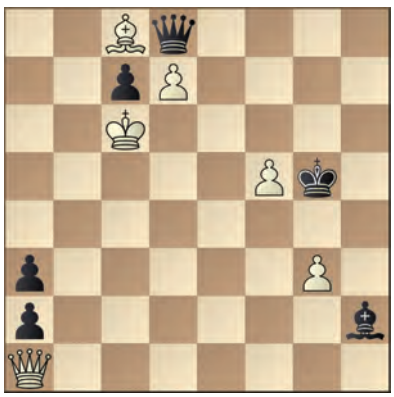
Afek – who is, incidentally, an International Master, Grandmaster of Chess Composition, tournament organiser, trainer, arbiter and journalist; a rare combination of skills, indeed – has enjoyed a professional chess career lasting more than half a century and he has an oasis of knowledge and experience to share.

"I have devoted a great deal of my time and energy to promoting the endgame study as an excellent educational tool to develop a sense of aesthetics and precision, as well as practising how to estimate accurately the power and qualities of each piece *alone* and in harmony with other pieces. All these virtues are essential in shaping a complete and original player; no less so than the knowledge of opening theory and middlegame strategy."

There are 17 chapters, covering various topics all the way from The Ultimate Sacrifice (meaning the queen) to Stalemate. The majority of studies come from Afek himself, but the works of others are included too, as are real games featuring the relevant themes.

Here is an example of a particularly fine study.

Yochanan Afek
9th–10th Place, 9th WCCT 2011–13



White to play and win

This is extraordinary, beautiful and highly instructive. I don't want to quote all of the explanatory notes here; the moves themselves will stand tall enough to demonstrate to the reader just how exceptional this study really is, with its amusing promotions and final twist of the rarest of underpromotions: **1 ♕g7+ ♔xf5 2 ♕h8!! a1Q! 3 ♕xa1 a2! 4 ♕h8! a1Q! 5 ♕xa1 ♗xg3 6 ♕h8! ♗h4 7 ♕xh4 ♕xh4!** (angling for stalemate after 8 d8♕+? ♔e5 9 ♕xh4) **8 d8♗!! ♔e5 9 ♗xh4** and wins.

Exceptional – and it makes one wonder just how good the other studies must have been to hold this one back in a share of ninth.

No digging around was required to find a wonderful example. Every page is replete with brilliance and the work as a whole is absolutely ideal for dipping into. In fact there are several ways to study the material. A chapter-by-chapter methodical approach would take a long time, but the reader could focus on a particular theme of interest instead. Another approach would be to randomly select just one or two examples and enjoy them, as an antidote to a painful over-the-board defeat.

This is a very fine book indeed and, whisper it gently, but we may already have a strong candidate for Book of the Year.

Sean Marsh

World Chess Championship 2018: Fabiano Caruana vs. Magnus Carlsen
Jerzy Konikowski and Uwe Bekemann, 184 pages, paperback
RRP £17.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £16.29**

The days of the 'instant' world championship match book appear, perhaps surprisingly, not to be fully over. German publishers Joachim Beyer Verlag were one company to rush out a full account of the Carlsen-Caruana match.

As you would expect, all the games are analysed in detail. In addition, the authors also take a look at Caruana's route to the final and the previous games between the champion and challenger. There are also interviews with various top players and experts under the title 'Predictions Before the Fight' – rounded off by a playful opportunity to compete with the champions: 'Try to Find Combinations Like Carlsen and Caruana!'.

ChessBase Magazine 187
ChessBase PC-DVD
RRP £17.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £16.15**

The latest *CBM* is for 'January/February 2019' and unsurprisingly focusses on the world championship match. Adams, Anand, Duda and So are just some of the star names who analyse each of the 15 clashes. Elsewhere Karsten Müller pays tribute to Anish Giri's endgame ability, while Simon Williams looks at some attacking brilliance courtesy of Ding Liren.

Chess Coaching for Kids: The U10 Project
Thomas Luther, 256 pages, hardback
RRP £29.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.95**

Long gone are the days in which few juniors played competitively before the age of 9; we now live in the age of the super prodigy and an abundance of tournaments for Under-10s and even Under-8s. As such, this work from FIDE Senior Trainer and German GM Thomas Luther is most welcome. Subtitled 'Surveys, Tests, Examples and Information about Chess U8/U10', Luther and his team analysed 2,500 games from players who were aged under 10. The result is a summary of the most common mistakes, highly relevant training advice and plenty of other useful information for parents and coaches of such young players.

Chess Informant 138
Sahovski Informator, 352 pages, paperback
SPECIAL PRICE £24.99

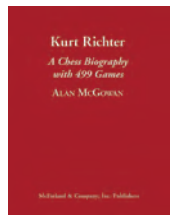
The latest selection of top-flight games and leading novelties arrives from Belgrade. The bulk of the 'Informator' remains these languagelessly-annotated games, although there are also a number of interesting articles, including Ernesto Inarkiev's take on the world championship match entitled 'Bourne is not superior any more'.

Do please note too that if you'd like both the book and a CD of the same material for *Chess Informant 138*, that is available from Chess & Bridge for £39.99 (Subscribers – £35.99), or if you want the CD alone that can be purchased for just £9.99 (Subscribers – £8.99).

Crucial Chess Skills for the Club Player Volume 2
Robert Ris, 392 pages, paperback
RRP £27.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £25.15**

Acclaimed Dutch author and coach Robert Ris continues to provide plenty of handy practical material for the club player. Ris begins with the endgame, first demonstrating the power of the king before looking at bishop endings, both same-coloured and opposite-coloured ones, the latter not always being as drawish as you might think. He moves on to discuss which is better and when, the knight or the bishop, before concluding with a wealth of material relating to positional imbalances.

Those who are yet to read *Crucial Chess Skills for the Club Player Volume 1* and wish to purchase both volumes together may do so for the special price of £54.00 (Subscribers – £48.60).



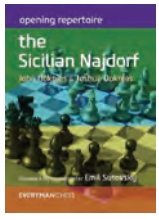
Kurt Richter: A Chess Biography with 499 Games
Alan McGowan, 356 pages, hardback
RRP £64.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £58.45**

McFarland's latest chess biography is

typically produced to a high standard and lavishly illustrated. Scottish chess historian Alan McGowan charts the career of 'The Executioner of Berlin', for, indeed, Kurt Richter was an extremely aggressive and dangerous opponent. Nowadays Richter (1900-1969) is a rather forgotten figure, but he was most certainly an accomplished player, theoretician and writer. We'll have much more on Kurt Richter in an upcoming issue.

New in Chess Yearbook 129
Peter Boel & René Olthof (eds),
256 pages, paperback
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

The latest *Yearbook* features Shakhriyar Mamedyarov on the cover alongside the headline 'Daredevil win by Shakh in the Open Ruy Lopez'. Inside, there are not only two detailed surveys on the Open Lopez, but five on the Sicilian and two on the King's Indian, including one from Baskaran Adhiban.



Opening Repertoire: The Sicilian Najdorf
John Doknjas & Joshua Doknjas,
352 pages, paperback
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

The names of the Doknjas brothers might not be that well-known outside their native Canada, but kudos to Everyman Chess for commissioning this impressive Najdorf repertoire. FM John and National Master Joshua might not be the very strongest of players, if still pretty good, but their love of the Najdorf is undoubted. Their analysis is impressive too, both of the critical opening stage and throughout each of the 42 annotated games. Overall, this is a cutting-edge black repertoire, featuring the likes of 6 ♗g5 ♘bd7 and 6 ♗e3 e5 7 ♘b3 ♗e6 8 f3 h5, as played by Mr. Najdorf himself, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave.

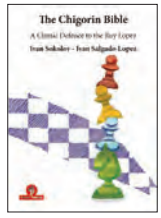
Play the Dutch! Part 1
Tibor Karolyi, 256 pages, paperback
RRP £22.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £20.65**

Is there no halting the pen of Tibor Karolyi these days? The Hungarian IM recently produced a detailed theoretical work on the Semi-Tarrasch for Chess Evolution and now switches to the more exciting waters of the Dutch Defence. In this opening volume of a two-part series, Karolyi maps out a fairly detailed repertoire for Black against White's many and varied alternatives to the main line, including 2 ♘c3, 2 e4, 2 ♗g5, which is met by 2...g6, and the dangerous 2 c4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 h4.

Play the Dutch! Part 2 is also available and sees Karolyi complete his repertoire for Black by advocating the Leningrad variation, specifically 7...c6 in the ultimate main line. This second volume also runs to 256 pages and is available from Chess & Bridge for £22.95 (Subscribers – £20.65), or you might prefer to purchase both works together for the special price of £44.00, which equates to just £40.00 for Subscribers.

Play the Queen's Indian Defence
Evgeniy Solozhenkin, 320 pages, paperback
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

Hot on the heels of Michael Roiz's work on the Queen's Indian for Quality Chess, as listed last month, comes this new work for Chess Stars. As usual for their works, the format is clear and obvious too is the affection which the Russian Grandmaster has for the opening. The coverage can unsurprisingly become quite theoretical at times, with Solozhenkin recommending after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 g3 the fashionable 4...♗a6. Notable too is the opening chapter where a 1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 move order is discussed before recommendations are presented for Black against the likes of the Colle and London Systems.

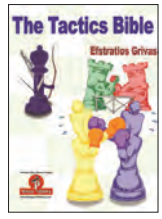


The Chigorin Bible:
A Classic Defence to the Ruy Lopez
Ivan Sokolov & Ivan Salgado Lopez,
350 pages, paperback
£27.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £25.15**

Thinkers Publishing continue to aim high, with this new work more than just a grandmaster level repertoire with 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5. The Chigorin is both one of the oldest and one of the most important lines of the Lopez, while the resulting structures and associated plans play a big part in many Lopez and Giuoco Piano lines. As such, Sokolov and Lopez have annotated 32 games in detail, aiming to highlight the most important motifs for both sides.

The Longest Game:
The Five Kasparov-Karpov Matches
Jan Timman, 356 pages, paperback
RRP £27.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £25.15**

Garry Kasparov has, of course, covered his matches with Anatoly Karpov in some detail, but the thoughts and insight of Jan Timman are always well worth reading too. The Dutch Grandmaster was, of course, one of the world's strongest players in the period 1984-1990, during which time all five matches occurred and with Kasparov only running out an overall winner by 73-71. Timman remembers the many twists of each match, supplies his impressions from the time and takes a fresh look at some of the most important games.



The Tactics Bible
Efstratios Grivas, 456 pages, paperback
RRP £29.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.95**

Leading FIDE trainer and Greek GM Grivas has been collecting combinations for a great many years. Here he presents his 'magnus opus', a vast puzzle work which incorporates all the more common types of tactic, as well as some pretty rare examples.

Understanding Before Moving 2:
Queen's Gambit Structures
Herman Grooten, 240 pages, paperback
RRP £24.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £22.45**

It is not just Robert Ris and Ivan Sokolov who have been kept busy writing follow-up works for Thinkers Publishing. Having begun his series by looking at the Ruy Lopez/Italian structures, Herman Grooten now moves on to consider the most important structures which arise within the realm of the Queen's Gambit. If you defend 1 d4 d5 or play 1 d4 d5 2 c4 and often find yourself struggling for a plan in the ensuing middlegame, a study of the key pawn structures and piece manoeuvres presented by the Dutch IM might well come in handy.

Saunders on Chess

Follow me on Twitter: @johnchess or email: johns@chess.co.uk

After the excitement of 2018's year-end, with elite chess players flocking to three mega-events in our part of the world (the Isle of Man, World Championship and London Chess Classic), I guess we must all feel reinvigorated chess-wise as 2019 begins. In my case this has not had the effect of luring me back to competition play, but there are more ways of paying tribute to the goddess Caïssa than pushing pieces round a board. I may not 'go to church', but I remain a devout believer.

I wonder if any readers share the following curious trait with me. I remain dedicated to furthering my chess education despite having little or no intention of putting any of it into practice. Over the past month or so I have read significantly more chess material than I have for a long time, of various genres. This is partly because I can. For a year or so I've struggled to read in comfort because I had not been able to find spectacles that worked well for reading books (or indeed playing chess, had I been minded to do so), but this eyesight problem has been happily resolved by the simple expedient of acquiring the right pair of glasses.

The rediscovered joy of reading has been an important part of the equation, but so has the reading matter. The book I've enjoyed most during the winter months has been *Kurt Richter: A Chess Biography* by Alan McGowan (McFarland). I hadn't known much about this German master of the middle decades of the 20th century before opening its pages, but this sumptuous book has given me the taste for his approach to chess. I understand that someone else is due to review the book in these pages in due course, so will desist from a detailed review, but I will say that I can heartily recommend it. It's very much a labour of love, with the Scottish (Canadian-resident) author having worked on it for no fewer than 40 years.

I can also recommend the practice of reading chess material the traditional way, with a printed book plus chessboard and men. I haven't done this for a while for the reasons given above, though I was able to read and move pieces around on a computer screen. The problem with a computer screen is that it is just too easy to switch on the analysis engine. Though I'm disciplined about the way I do this when annotating a game for a magazine or website (I religiously play through a game at least once *without* using an engine so as not to be influenced by its assessments, and to be more honest in adjudging the difficulty involved in finding the right moves), I don't always adhere to this principle when playing through a game for pleasure or education.

However, when using a traditional board you are thrown on to your own resources and you cannot use the engine as a crutch. I think a lot of us are too quick to resort to electronic assistance which can lead to lazy thinking. Another, albeit more minor, advantage is the sensual pleasure to be had from handling a physical chess set, and this is not to be underestimated when sitting down to study some chess.

The much-missed FM Steve Berry (xviii.iii.1951 - iv.i.2019), a twelve-time Surrey Champion.

The Richter book provided particular pleasure as I read it between games of the world championship. After those relentless Carlsen-Caruana draws, it was a relief to time-travel back to an earlier epoch when opening theory was less developed and defensive technique wasn't quite so honed. But, make no mistake, they could play back then, certainly to a much higher level than most of us club players.

I think it is a great mistake to judge earlier generations of players purely on their naivety in the opening. While is also certainly true that there are a great many more strong players today than there have ever been, a handful of the top players of that era played tremendous chess and still have much to teach us. Richter was arguably one of them. As Tarrasch said of another famous player of those times, Richter went his own way in the opening, preferring his own pet lines to contemporary theory, as well as having a quirky preference for knights over bishops, but on his day he could be a devastating attacker.

The Richter book is a pricey hardback, and won't suit all tastes and pockets, so here's my recommendation for a book bargain. Take down a book you already own from your bookshelf and read it properly. Cost – zero. We've all got good books lying unread on the shelves. Alternatively, choose an old favourite and read it again. I found myself doing that over Christmas, enjoying *Secrets of Spectacular Chess* by Jonathan Levitt and David Friedgood. My copy is the 1995 Batsford first edition, but Everyman brought a second edition out in 2008. It's a delight and should beguile even the most philistine of OTB players into appreciating the aesthetics of studies and problems.

Finally, a sad postscript: the year was only a few days old when news came through of the passing of my former clubmate, Steve Berry. It's clear from the many words written about him online that Steve was much liked and respected through the British chess community. Steve was also a contributor to this magazine, working as assistant to BH Wood at Sutton Coldfield in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when he was often responsible for writing the very popular *How Good is Your Chess?* Feature.

Steve and I were club colleagues at Mitcham CC some 20-30 years ago and he was also a popular member of the Hendon and King's Head clubs, though originally from Yorkshire. Amongst his many tournament successes were shared first in the 2017 British Over-65 Championship and twelve Surrey county titles. He was the reigning Surrey champion at his death, attesting to his Korchnoi-like retention of chess strength. For my part I will remember his laconic Yorkshire humour and the twinkle in the eye. Goodbye, old friend.

NEW FRITZ-TRAINER DVDs

Let GM Nicholas Pert provide you with a fighting 1.d4 repertoire with his two new DVDs. Watch IM Robert Ris' interactive DVD "Extreme Calculation" and become a great calculator at the board!

NICHOLAS PERT: AN ATTACKING REPERTOIRE WITH 1.d4 – PART ONE (1.d4 d5 2.c4)

In this detailed "two-part" video series Pert takes a look at a main line White system based on 1.d4. This series is aimed at the ambitious player who is looking to put maximum pressure on their opponent from the start of the game. In this DVD he considers positions in which Black plays with an early d5. The start position for this DVD is 1.d4 d5 2.c4. This series has many chapters and is a thorough analysis, showing how to fight for the advantage from positions in which Black plays with an early d5. This is a high-level opening choice with many fresh ideas designed to cause problems for Black players in their pet opening systems. 1.d4 d5 2.c4 has been played by practically all of the World's leading players at some point in their chess careers. The bulk of this 39 chapter DVD considers how to tackle the Queen's Gambit Accepted, Queen's Gambit Declined and Slav Defence. In addition I examine the Triangle system, 2...c5, Tarrasch Defense, Henning-Shara Gambit, Baltic Defense, Chigorin and Albin Counter-Gambit.

£26.95

NICHOLAS PERT: AN ATTACKING REPERTOIRE WITH 1.d4 – PART TWO (1.d4 Nf6 2.c4)

The second volume focuses on a White system against openings such as the "Nimzo-Indian", Benoni and Benko. Please note that the Grunfeld and Kings Indian variations (2...g6) are not covered in this DVD. There are many aggressive, fresh ideas designed to cause problems for Black players. "My chosen lines tend to be very attacking, aiming to quickly fight for control of the centre and an early attack on the black king. There is also a lot of original analysis included. This video series considers how to tackle the "Nimzo-Indian" using the move 4.Qc2. Various Benoni lines are considered, the main line, Czech, Snake, Late and Old Benoni. Some fresh, aggressive, attacking ideas have been considered against the Benko Gambit and Blumenfeld. In addition I have looked at how to play against 2... b6, the Budapest and Fajarowicz."

£26.95

ROBERT RIS: EXTREME CALCULATION TRAINING

After the success of the first volume on Calculation Training, Dutch IM Robert Ris continues with "Extreme Calculation Training" — a wide range of new aspects which have to be mastered to become a great calculator at the board! The topics discussed in the original series (candidate moves, method of elimination & imagination) are certainly useful when studying the content of this new video series. Special attention will be paid to intermediate moves, quiet moves, sacrifices on empty squares, mating patterns, ignoring opponent threats, calculation in defence and methods of comparison. On top of that, more practical advice for training is recommended, for instance how to handle your time management and how to visualise the position in your mind during the calculation process. After going through the 13 examples from the theoretical section, it's time to switch the brain to active participation and your calculation skills will be tested seriously! The frequent request for more puzzles has been granted, as Ris has selected no less than 50 games with multiple questions. After all, training your calculation abilities is an activity which never ends; it takes continual practise to stay sharp at the board!

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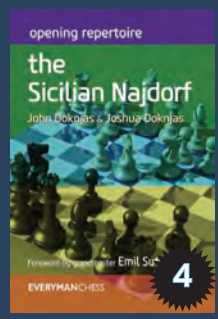

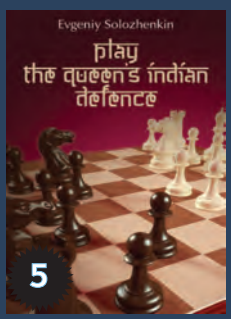

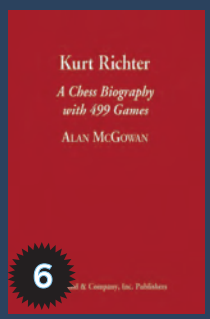

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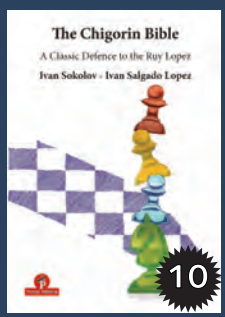

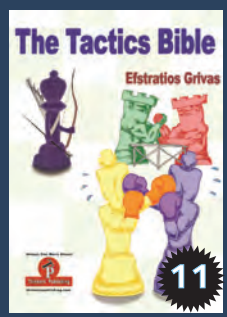

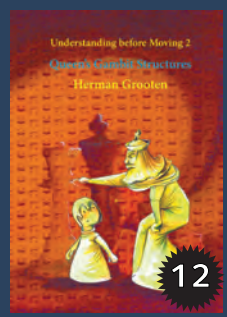

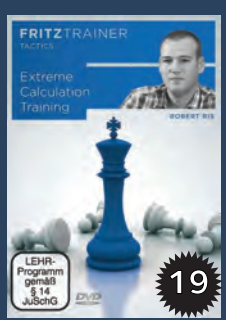

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